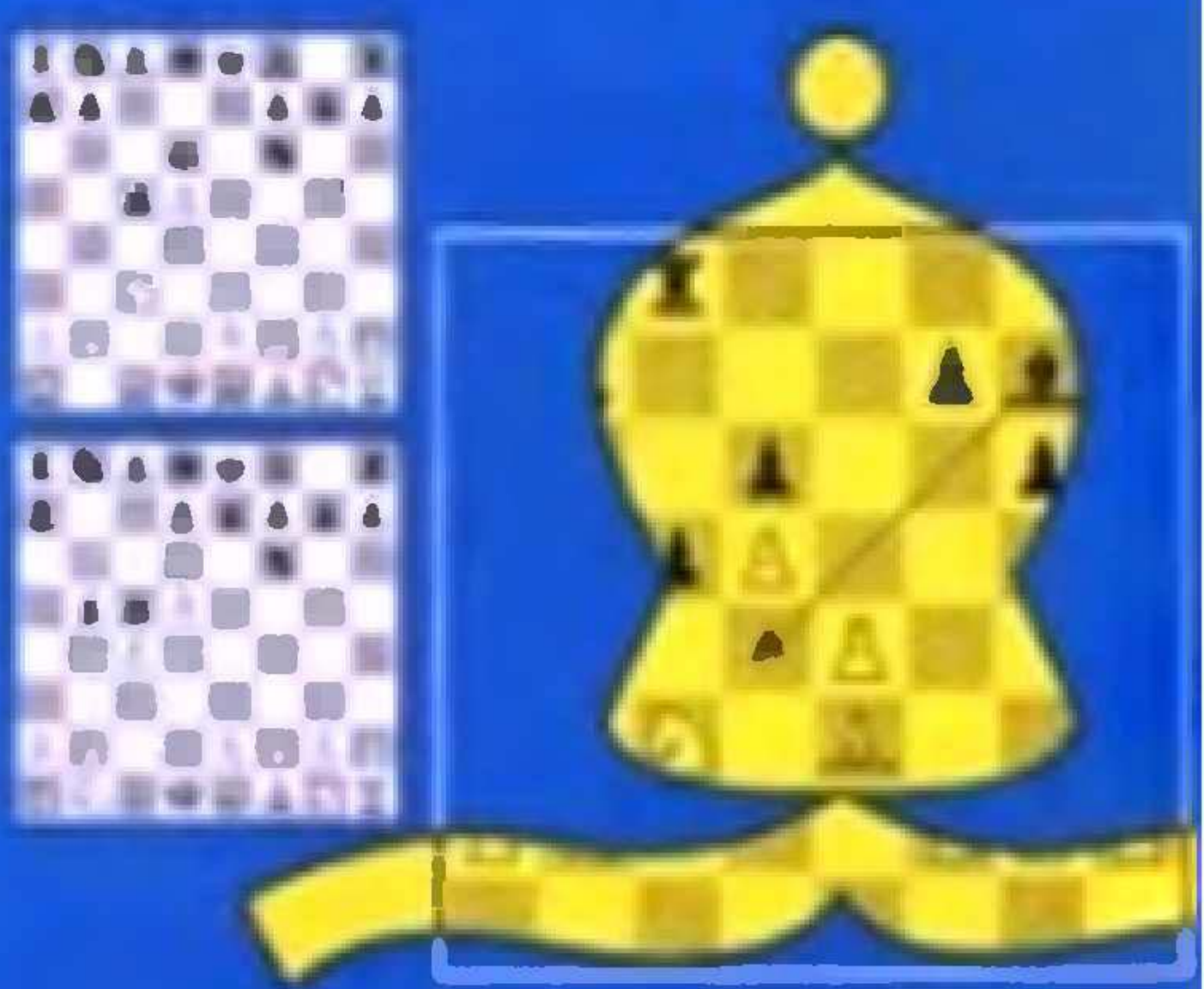
Mastering the Modern Benoni and the Benko Gambit

Robert Bellin & Pietro Ponzetto



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Robert Bellin and Pietro Ponzetto

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Preface

This work has been written with one major aim in mind: to teach *understanding* of the opening. Of course, this cannot be achieved by cataloguing variations, and we have sought instead to explain the key ideas and plans of each player, and to do so quickly and easily with our special Read and Play method which permits the reader to follow the greater part of the text without a chessboard.

Our guiding principle for achieving this ambitious goal is the fact that once the central pawns have stabilized there is a greater strategic and tactical affinity between diverse variations with the same central pawn structure than between different lines of the same variation which lead to different pawn structures. This simple approach instantly enables us to understand the essential ideas of any position whatsoever. This is in marked contrast to what happens in ordinary books of opening theory, where the exigencies of systematization make the process of understanding very difficult.

Having established our starting point the continuation follows logically: we divide the opening not according to variations but according to 'type of centre' (normally retaining the name of the principal variation), which means that different lines of the same variation may be examined in one or other type of centre according to the pawn structure which arises. Each type of centre is treated in three parts: a full exposition of the strategic ideas (paying particular attention to the most modern), an overview of the recurring tactical themes, and finally some illustrative games with particularly deep annotations in the opening. In examining these games (and for this it *is* necessary to use a chessboard) the reader will find not only a practical correspondence with the two theoretical parts, but also some additional exemplifying variations. A close reading of the illustrative games is indispensable for full comprehension of the strategic concepts previously expounded.

Whilst it has not been feasible to include every single type of centre which can arise, we have covered all the most important and common structures, which comprise at least 85 per cent of all cases. The few possibilities not covered (which all derive from minor byways) can be referred to in traditional monographs.

We have tried to be as objective as possible in our approach to the subject and have aimed for an impartial exposition of the ideas in each type of centre, so that the work will be equally useful whichever side the reader intends playing.

This *oeuvre* can be used in various ways by a wide range of players, from beginners and club players seeking to learn the fundamentals of the opening, right up to experts who want to familiarize themselves quickly with different variations or to acquire the essential grounding for an entirely new addition to their opening repertoire. Naturally, top competitive players, and others who require a more detailed knowledge of the variations and all the latest wrinkles, must use this work in conjunction with a systematic text.

We hope that readers will find our exposition clear, learn soundly and enjoyably, and above all increase their understanding and thereby improve their playing standard: only then will our Read and Play method have hit the mark.

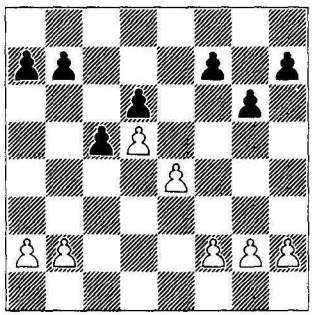
Robert Bellin
Pietro Ponzetto

Introduction

This book looks at two defences, the Modern Benoni (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6) and the Benko Gambit (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5). As the material is not divided according to the traditional subdivisions of variations but on the basis of the 'type of centre', the reader might find it useful to have an overview of the topics that will be examined. The first part, in three chapters, considers the Modern Benoni.

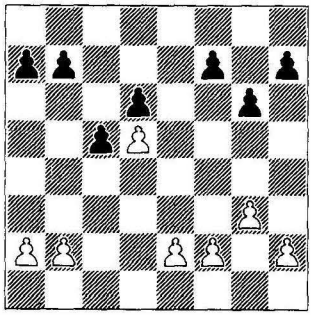
Chapter 1
The Classical Centre: This chapter analyses lines of play in which White makes the advance e2–e4 giving rise to the following type of centre:

I



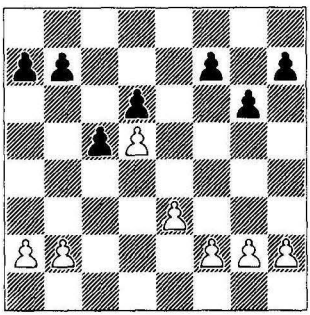
Chapter 2
The Fianchetto Centre: White fianchettoes his KB, including games where he takes this decision before developing his QN to c3.

II



Chapter 3
The Restricted Centre: The third chapter brings together all those

III

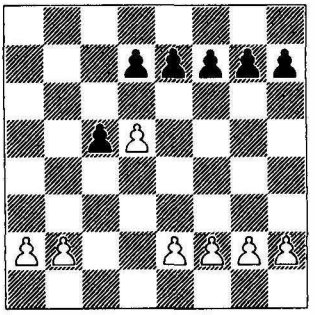


lines in which White opts for a more restricted centre with e3.

The second part of the book is also split into three chapters and is devoted to the Benko Gambit.

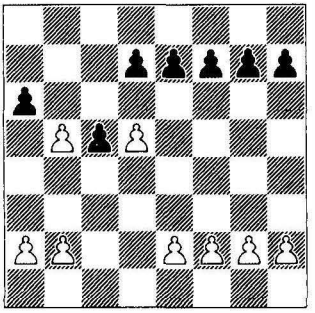
Chapter 4
The Standard Centre: Examines the most classical developments after White gobbles up the gambit pawns, taking first on b5 and then on a6.

IV



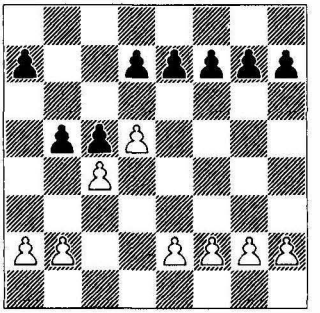
Chapter 5
The Modern Centre: Deals with those variations in which White accepts the gambit pawn on b5 but does not take on a6.

V



Chapter 6
The Anti-Benko Centre: Methods whereby white declines the gambit are considered.

VI



Which variation should I play?

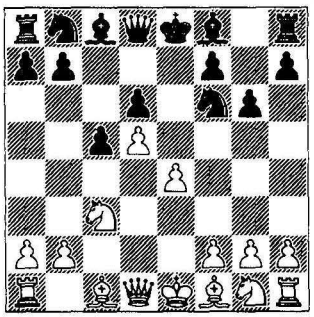
To help you decide which variation is most appropriate for your style we have compiled a table of variations (see pages 163–5) which indicates their level of strategic and tactical complexity. In addition, we have used a survey of nearly 1000 games played in tournaments of FIDE category 7 and above to extract statistical data concerning the frequency and results percentage of each variation so as to provide a useful overview of their level of risk. Thus you are given all the information necessary to make the most suitable selection according to your needs.

Part One

The Modern Benoni

1 The Classical Centre

After the moves 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 *(1)*



we obtain the basic position for this type of centre, which branches out into many of the most important variations of the Modern Benoni:

Mikenas Variation
7 f4 ♗g7 8 e5

Bishop Check Variation
7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+

Standard Four Pawns Variation
7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2

Penrose Variation
7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2

Saemisch System
7 f3

Queen Check Variation
7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+

Uhlmann System
7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 (or 8 ♗g5) 8 ... 0-0 9 ♗g5

Main Variation
7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0

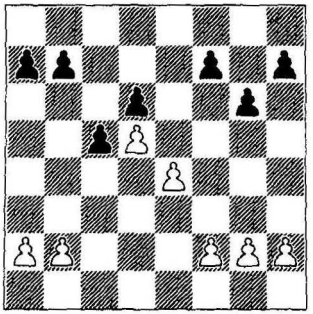
1 Strategic Ideas

In order to understand the basic strategic elements common to all the variations listed above we shall first of all consider the pawn structure of the Classical Centre on its own *(2)*.

The following elements are immediately apparent:

(1) The respective pawn majorities (White's in the centre and Black's on the queenside).

2

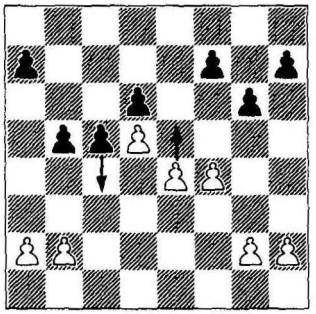


(2) The fixed weakness of the pawn on d6.
(3) The weakness of the d4 square.
(4) The dynamism of the pawns on e4 and c5.

The pawn majorities

The mobilization of the respective pawn majorities based on the dynamism of the pawns on e4 and c5 is a fundamentally important strategic idea *(3)*.

3

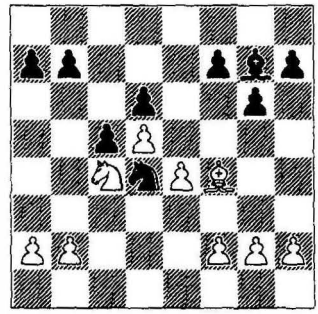


White's breakthrough in the centre with e4–e5 can facilitate an attack on the kingside in various ways: (1) the clearing of the e4 square can serve to transfer pieces (♘c3–e4); (2) if Black captures with ... d6xe5 then the recapture f4xe5 gives White not *only* an open f-file but also a dangerous passed pawn on d5; (3) if Black refrains from capturing by ... d6xe5 White can push on with e5–e6 or f4–f5. On Black's side, the advance of his queenside majority has two contrasting consequences: (1) the advance ... c5–c4 frees the important c5 square, emphasizes White's weakness on d3 and opens the a7–g1 diagonal against White's king, *all* of which contribute to the organization of active piece play on the kingside; (2) should an ending arise, Black is immediately poised to create a passed pawn.

The weakness of the d6 pawn and the d4 square

The attempt to exploit the respective structural weaknesses is another very basic strategic aim *(4)*.

4



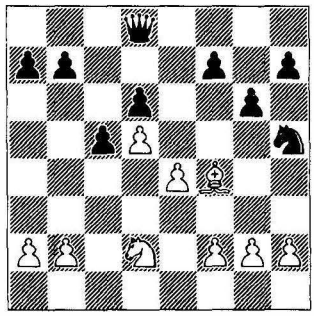
White can pressurize the d6 pawn by placing his QB on f4 and a knight on c4. Almost invariably it is the KN which goes to c4 (♘g1–f3–d2–c4) as the QN finds a natural square on c3 where it both protects the e-pawn and helps to prevent Black's queenside expansion by ... b5. The plan of pressurizing d6 is not entirely incompatible with the mobilization of the kingside majority, as White can always move the QB and follow up with f4. Clearly, however, the placing of a bishop on f4 and a knight on c4 can also lead to the central e4–e5 breakthrough without need of the f-pawn. In this latter case White's main aim is to create a passed pawn on d5.

For his part, Black can seek to establish a knight (or even the KB) on d4. It can easily be seen that in order to reach d4 Black's knight will have to travel via c7 and b5. Both knights are capable of reaching c7: ... ♘b8–a6–c7 or ... ♘g8–f6–e8–c7.

When White has developed the QB to f4 and threatens to augment the pressure on d6 by ♘d2–c4 Black normally pre-empts the attack by chasing the QB off the h2–b8 diagonal with ... ♘f6–h5 *(5)*.

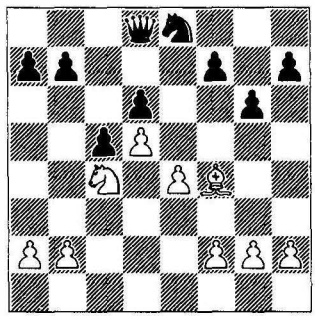
Sometimes, however, especially when White has carried out the

5



manoeuvre ♘g1–f3–d2–c4 before developing the QB, Black may be obliged to defend his d-pawn by ... ♘f6–e8 *(6)*.

6

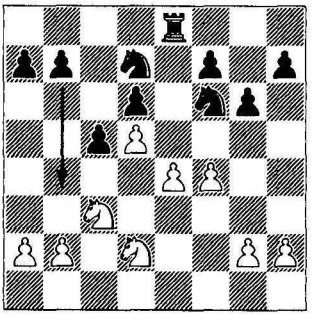


Clearly, with such a defensive reaction Black risks falling into passivity to such an extent that Black sometimes even sacrifices the pawn in order to achieve a rapid and active development, as we shall see further on in the case of the Restricted Centre (see Chapter 3).

The weakness of the e4 pawn

A simple examination of diagram 3 will reveal that after f4 the pawn on e4 is weakened since it is deprived of its natural support by f2–f3. One thematic and very important idea for Black is to exert pressure against e4 by occupying the semi-open e-file. This aims to tie White's forces to the defence of his e-pawn and also impedes the advance e4–e5 *(7)*.

7



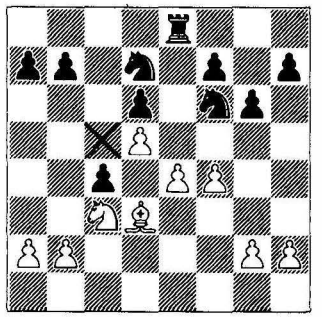
Black can indirectly increase the pressure on e4 by trying to drive away the ♘c3 with the advance ... b5-b4, always being careful to bear in mind that this advance cedes irrevocable control of c4 to the opponent.

In contrast to the key role played by Black's use of the semi-open e-file it is worth noting that White's semi-open c-file invariably plays no part in his plans.

The c5 square

Another method of increasing pressure against e4 is to free the c5 square for occupation by the ♘d7. Black may be able to achieve this by playing ... b5 and ... c4, but given that White will oppose this plan he sometimes has recourse to the pseudo-sacrifice or even sacrifice of his c-pawn *(8)*.

8



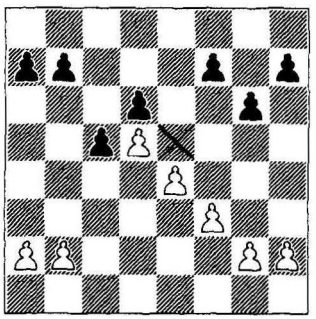
The diagram shows an example of the pseudo-sacrifice, where if White captures with ♗d3xc4 then Black plays ... ♘f6xe4, regaining the pawn and destroying the enemy centre. On the other hand, if White retreats with, say, ♗d3–c2 then Black can augment the pressure against e4 by occupying the c5 square with the ♘d7. It should be observed, however, that the advance ... c5–c4 loses control of d4.

The e5 square

To avoid problems with his e-pawn in the opening phase White may decide to protect it by f3. This does not necessarily mean that White renounces the mobilization of his majority, as he can always play f4 later on, albeit at the cost of a tempo.

An important consequence of safeguarding the e-pawn with f3 is that Black obtains the possibility of utilizing the e5 square *(9)*.

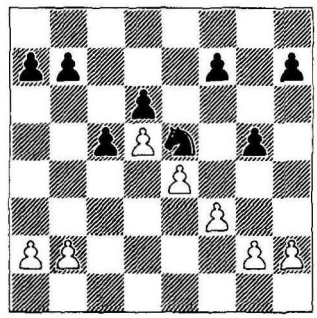
9



The occupation of e5 now becomes central to Black's plans, whether it be to commence a build-up on the kingside or to seek simplification. For example, if White has carried out the thematic manoeuvre ♘g1–f3–d2–c4 Black can exchange knights by ... ♘d7–e5xc4. Consequently, when White plays f3 he often opts for a piece set-up aimed at avoiding such simplification, e.g. ♘g1–e2–g3 and ♗f1–e2, or ♘g1–f3–d2 and ♗f1–e2. In such cases Black must be careful not to occupy e5 without taking precautions as otherwise he may be chased away by f4 allowing White to revert profitably to a central break-through plan. Thus Black must preface occupation of e5 with prophylactic measures of which there are two types:

(1) Protecting the position of the piece that occupies e5 by playing ... g5 *(10)*.

10

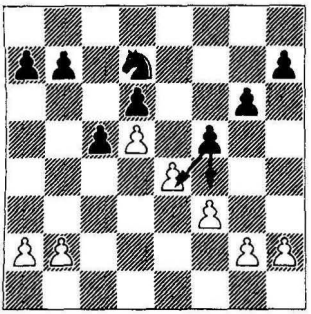


Now if White wishes to drive off the knight on e5 he will have to weaken his own king position by playing g3. Note that the advance ... g5 weakens the f5 square and thus is not to be recommended if White is in a position to exploit this weakness.

(2) Playing ... f5 before occupying the e5 square *(11)*.

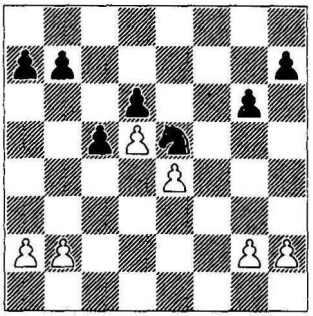
This advance signals the start of active kingside operations by Black whilst at the same time

11



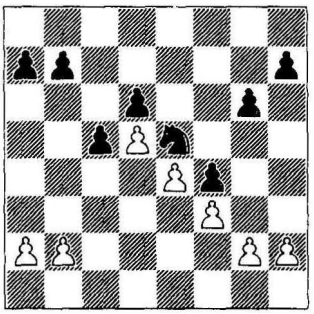
securing e5 for occupation by eliminating the possibility of f4, which can be achieved either by ... fxe4 *(12)*,

12



or by ... f4 *(13)*, and Black has achieved his aim in both cases.

13

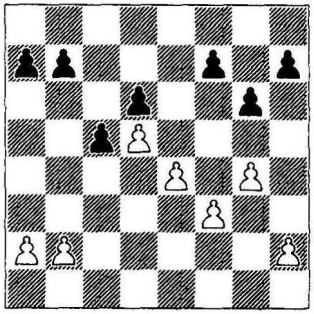


Again it must be noted that the advance ... f5 also has its own positional drawback in that it weakens e6. Thus Black must be careful to make sure that the opponent is not in a position to exploit this weakness.

The advance g2–g4

As White is scarcely able to escape unscathed from a spatial disadvantage such as that shown in diagram 13, when he plays f3 he sometimes fights for space with g2–g4 *(14)*.

14



Although the main aim of this advance is to avoid being squeezed on the kingside it can also lead to the opening of lines of attack if Black insists on playing ... f5.

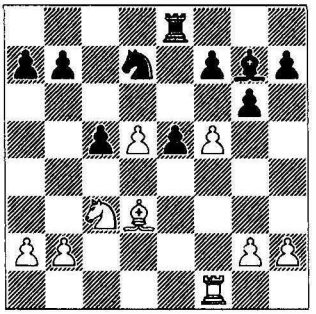
The positional sacrifice of the e-pawn

From the preceding examples it is clear that the occupation of the e5

square is of major importance to Black whether it be to hold up White's central play or to launch a kingside offensive. It follows, therefore, that it is in White's interest to oblige Black to block e5 with a pawn which would close both the e-file and the h8–a1 diagonal at a stroke, thus considerably diminishing Black's dynamic possibilities. To this end White occasionally resorts to a positional sacrifice of his e-pawn which is normally seen in two forms:

(1) after f4 White continues with e5 and, after ... dxe5, pushes on with f5, thus leaving e5 blocked by a black pawn *(15)*.

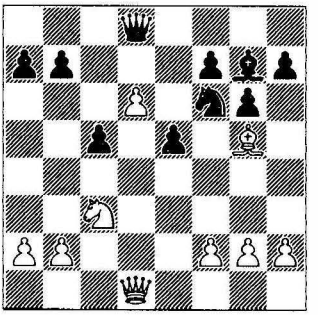
15



The clearance of e4, together with the mobility of the passed d-pawn and pending opening of the f-file, infuses White's attack with considerable vigour in contrast to the black pieces whose activity is markedly reduced by the obstructive presence of the pawn on e5. In this type of situation Black frequently decides to give back the pawn by ... e4, but even then the initiative may well stay in White's hands.

(2) White plays e5 without f4 in order, after ... dxe5, to drive a troublesome thorn into Black's flesh with the advance d6 *(16)*.

16



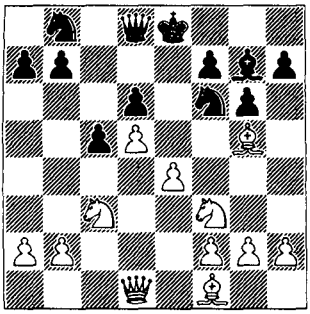
Here White is banking on using the freeing of the e4 and d5 squares plus the control of c7 and e7 to force Black into a cramped and defensive position.

The pin on Black's KN

White's attacking chances on the kingside become more promising if Black can be persuaded by some means or other to weaken his kingside pawn structure. With this in mind White sometimes decides to pin Black's KN *(17)*.

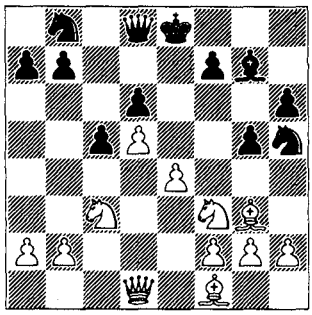
It is quite normal in this type of position for Black to rid himself of the annoying pin by playing ...

17



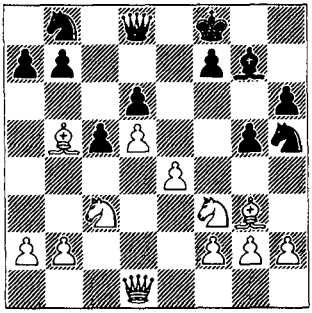
h6 and ... g5. However, once the bishop has retreated to g3 its action on the h2–b8 diagonal can also be troublesome, especially in view of the possibility of increasing the pressure on d6 by playing ♘f3–d2–c4. It behoves Black, therefore, to complete his unpinning manoeuvre by preparing to eliminate the enemy bishop with ... ♘f6–h5 before White has time to play ♘f3–d2 *(18)*.

18



Here, however, White can gain the advantage by playing ♗b5+ after which Black, in order not to lose his d-pawn, is obliged to move his king and lose his castling rights *(19)*.

19

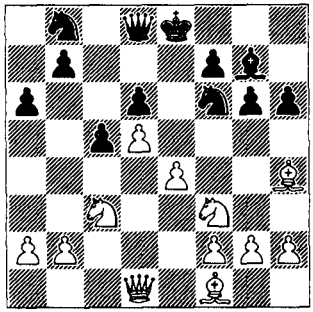


In such positions, White frequently has recourse to the positional sacrifice e5 in order to exploit to the utmost Black's kingside weaknesses on the white squares, e.g., e5 ♘xg3, fxg3 dxe5, ♘d2 etc.

The prophylactic ... a7–a6

Black can avoid all the foregoing complications by interposing the prophylactic ... a6 after the initial advance ... h6 *(20)*.

20

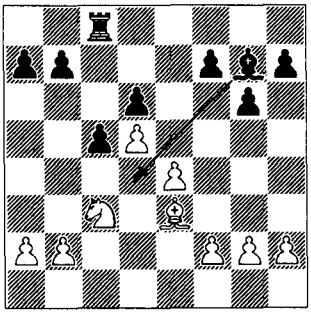


This advance threatens to mobilize the queenside pawn majority and if White wants to prevent the subsequent ... b5 he must play a4 in which case Black has gained the time to complete his unpinning manoeuvre (... g5 followed by ... ♘f6–h5xg3) whilst avoiding the awkward check on b5.

The opening of the c-file

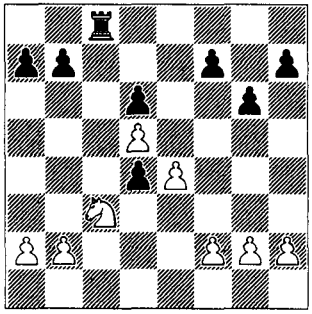
Whereas White can open lines in the centre and on the kingside relatively easily the same is not true for Black on the queenside. Given Black's technical difficulties in activating his rooks on the queenside he sometimes resorts to an artificial method of opening a file either by means of the sacrifice or pseudo-sacrifice of his c-pawn, as already mentioned, or by implementing the strategic idea of occupying d4. White will naturally do his best to oppose such occupation and keep d4 under control, a task normally performed by the development of the QB to e3 *(21)*.

21



The fight for the initiative is so important that Black may decide to occupy d4 even at the cost of compromising his own pawn structure *(22)*.

22

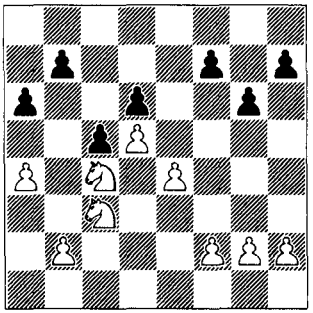


Evidently, Black is only likely to implement this idea when he is confident of obtaining meaningful pressure along the c-file.

The advance a2–a4 (–a5)

Black's queenside expansion is based on the advance ... b5, which is normally prepared by ... a6. White almost always opposes this play by playing a4 *(23)*.

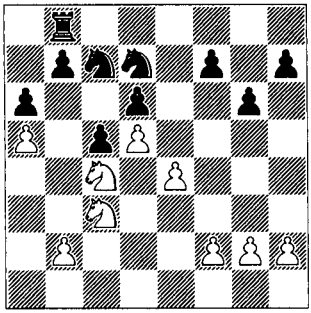
23



If White has played the KN to c4 this advance also has the important effect of safeguarding the knight's position. The reader will recall that the presence of this knight on c4 is useful not only for pressurizing Black's d-pawn but also for supporting the central e5 breakthrough.

After a4 Black is generally unable to play ... b5 since that square is also normally controlled by White's QN. He must therefore support the b-pawn's advance with a piece and this can be achieved either by placing the QR on b8 and the QB on d7, or manoeuvring a knight to c7. However, White can further oppose Black's plans by playing a5 *(24)*.

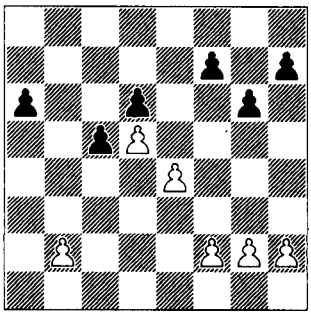
24



After this advance Black has the possibility of effecting the thematic manoeuvre ... ♘c7–b5–d4 or, thanks to the ♘d7, of playing ... b5 anyway. After White captures *en passant* we obtain the following pawn structure *(25)*.

The appearance of weak pawns on

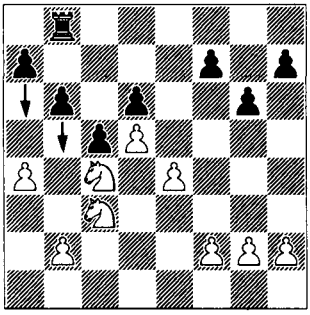
25



a6 and b2, plus the half-open a- and b-files enriches the position with new strategic elements. Speaking generally, we may say that this queenside situation is favourable for Black, but it must not be forgotten that the main aim of the moves a4 and a5 is simply to slow down Black's counterplay in order to gain the precious time necessary to effect a central breakthrough.

When White has played an early a4 and Black decides that he wants to go for ... b5 even at the cost of a tempo he may first play ... b6 before ... a6 in order to prevent the restraining a5 *(26)*.

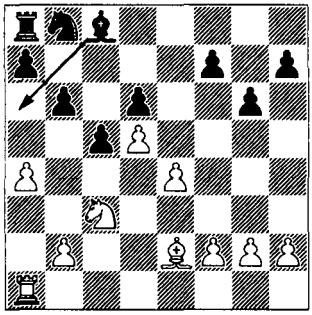
26



Only at the price of moving his b-pawn twice can Black guarantee getting it to b5.

The move ... b6 also contains the possibility of serving as a fianchetto for Black, which he may use to reduce the pressure on his d-pawn by exchanging White's knight on c4 by the manoeuvre ... ♗c8–a6xc4. This may sometimes lead to the white-squared bishops being exchanged on the a6–f1 diagonal *(27)*.

27

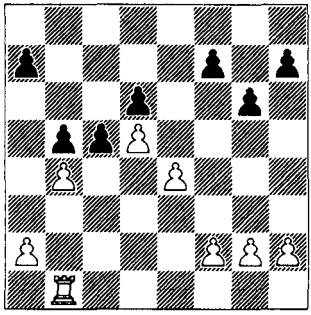


If White has already played a4 he can answer ... ♗a6 with ♘b5, thus discouraging simplification since the exchange ... ♗xb5, axb5 is normally very favourable to White on account of the backward, fixed weakness on a7 and the pressure on the a-file. It should be noted, however, that there are exceptions to this assessment which arise when Black has a knight on c7 in which case after ... ♗a6, ♘b5 he may capture with ... ♗xb5 and after axb5 play ... a6. At this point if White takes on a6 Black can expand normally on the queenside with ... b5 and recapture the a-pawn later on.

The b2–b4 counter

Another way to meet Black's queenside expansion is to counter ... b5 with b4 *(28)*.

28

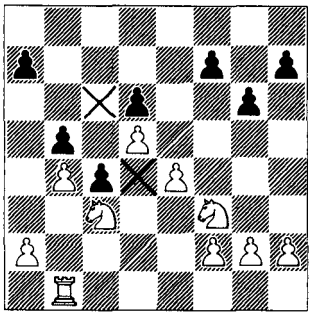


This idea can also be carried out in the absence of the a-pawns which may have been exchanged following the moves ... a6 and a4.

White will generally support the advance of the b-pawn with his QR (in order to remove it from the long dagonal) or perhaps the queen (♕d2). The aim is to pressurize Black's pawns on b5 and c5 and oblige him either to capture on b4 or play ... c4 *(29)*.

This blockading manoeuvre is most effective when White's KN is still on f3 from where, after ... c4, it can go to d4 and observe c6. It is worth noting, however, that

29

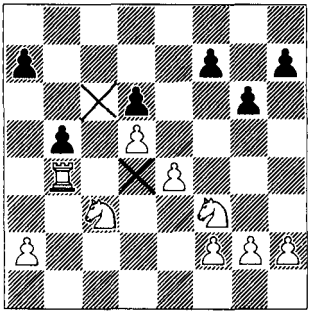


even if White's knight has gone to c4 it can still reach c6 via a5.

We also observe, in passing, that here Black can evidently no longer make use of c5.

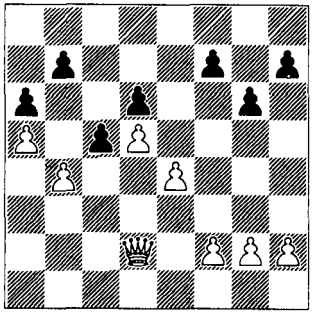
Should Black exchange by ... cxb4 then here too White can turn the tables on the queenside *(30)*.

30



White exerts strong pressure on b5 and the ♘f3 can go to d4. If this knight manages to establish itself on c6 it could stifle any counterplay along the c-file. The b4 advance may also be effected before Black has played ... b5 in which case the idea is not to contain the opponent's initiative but rather to take control on the queenside *(31)*.

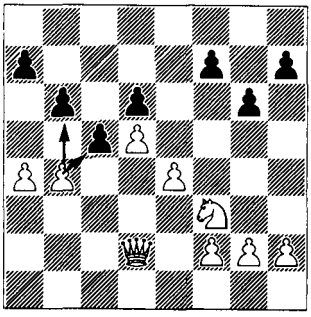
31



In such positions White has excellent chances of over-running the opponent on the queenside since the inevitable exchange of the pawns on b4 and c5 is fundamentally very much in his favour.

Let us see a further example of this type of plan *(32)*.

32



When ... b6 has been played, the tension between the pawns on b4 and c5 is favourable to White

since Black dare not capture on b4 on pain of ceding d4 (and thereby c6) whereas White may either capture on c5 when he pleases or push to b5, occupy c4 with a knight, and then open the a-file and weaken b6 by a5.

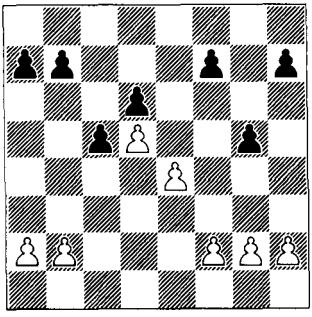
Faced with the kind of strategic suffocation illustrated in the last two examples it is quite clear that Black must develop counterplay on the kingside at almost any price.

The advance ... g6–g5

Just as White can try to nip Black's queenside play in the bud as in the previous examples, so Black can take similar measures against White's ambitions in the centre.

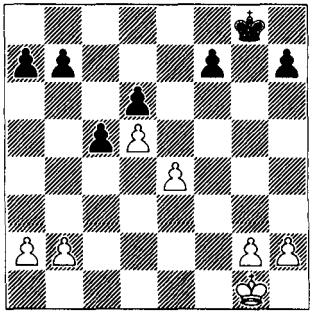
As we have already seen with regard to occupying e5, one means of impeding f4 is to play ... g5 *(33)*.

33



It will be recalled that in situations of this type Black must constantly bear in mind the possibility of the opponent exploiting the weakness of f5. On the other hand if White insists on playing f4 regardless then both structures will be weakened after the disappearance of the pawns on f4 and g5 and consequently both king's positions will become more exposed (the kings invariably castle short) *(34)*.

34



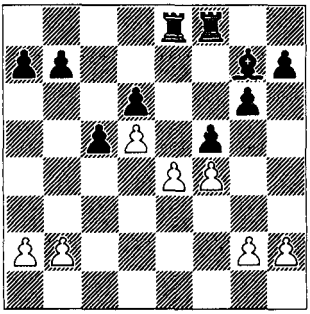
In such positions of mutual weakness everything depends on whose pieces are the more active and effective.

The ... f7–f5 counter

Waiting until f4 has been played and then countering with ... f5 is another method of challenging White's central pawn advance, thereby breaking up the enemy centre *(35)*.

To effect this plan it is essential for Black to have control of e5 in

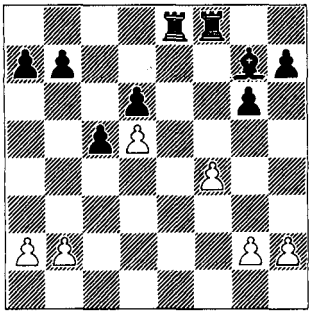
35



order to prevent White simply advancing.

The aim of the ... f5 counter is to exchange the pawns on f5 and e4 and thus simultaneously weaken d5 and increase the possibilities for the major pieces on the e- and f-files *(36)*.

36

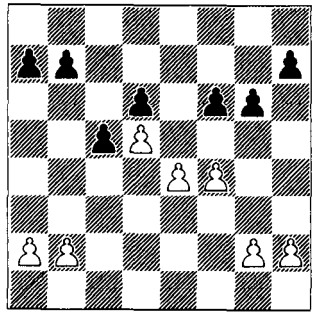


White's pawn structure has been weakened and Black can use the e-file to penetrate enemy territory. It must be remembered, however, that the advance ... f5 weakens e6 and Black must always be on guard against the adversary making capital out of this weakness.

The defensive ... f7–f6

We have seen above that in playing either ... g5 or ... f5 Black does not limit himself just to containing the enemy centre, but also actively seeks counterplay on the kingside. By contrast, the defensive ... f6 constitutes a pure holding strategy *(37)*.

37

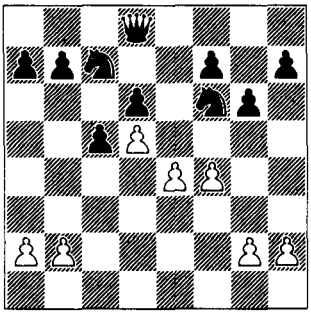


Here Black must seize the initiative on the queenside at any price in order not to get trapped in the cul-de-sac of passive defence. Although the e6 square is also weakened, in this type of set-up it is not so easy for White to take advantage of it since the pawn on f6 denies a white knight access to g5.

Pressure against d5

Another way of containing the advance e4–e5 is to exert strong pressure against White's d-pawn *(38)*.

38



Black's pieces are effectively placed and White is not able to push on with e5 as that would cost the d-pawn. In such positions, however, Black must always be alert to the possibility of a positional sacrifice of the e-pawn followed by the thrust d6.

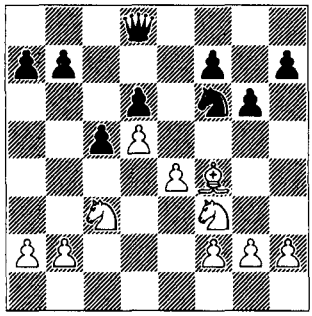
2 Tactical ideas

This type of centre contains many thematic and recurring tactical ideas which can crop up in various positions and different lines. In fact, this classical centre highlights the tactical and dynamic aspects of the game to such an extent that the result is frequently decided by combinative motifs. We will examine those tactical ideas which occur most frequently in practice.

The pseudo-sacrifice on d6

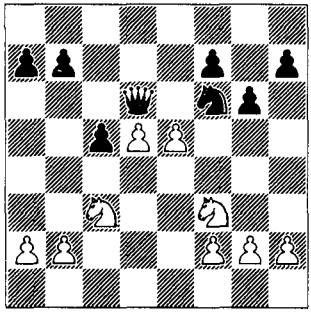
One recurring theme, generally favourable to White, is the temporary sacrifice of a piece on d6 immediately regained by means of a fork. In order to carry out this pseudo-sacrifice there must be a black knight on f6 and White must have sufficient control of e5 to be able to follow up with the fork *(39)*.

39



Here White cannot simply play e5 since he would lose the d-pawn after ... dxe5. He can however play ♗xd6 ♕xd6, e5 forking queen and knight *(40)*.

40



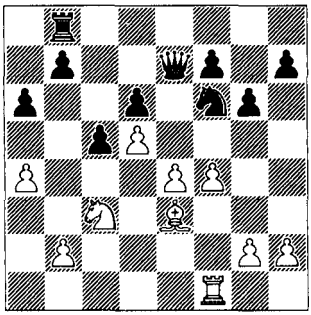
Generally speaking, White regains the piece with advantage since the clearing of e4 and cre-

ation of a passed pawn on d5 usually work in his favour. Naturally, this theme can also arise in different forms, e.g. the sacrifice on d6 may be made by a knight on c4 and the fork e5 may be supported by a rook on e1.

The skewer on the h2–b8 diagonal

Black often places his QR on b8 to support the advance ... b5. In some circumstances White can exploit the position of this rook with a tactical idea based on luring the black queen to e5 *(41)*.

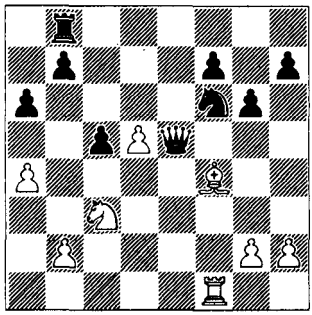
41



At first sight it seems that Black has e5 under control but in fact White can break through with e5 since ... dxe5, fxe5 ♕xe5 would allow the skewer ♗f4 *(42)*.

This theme is sometimes seen even when Black can capture on e5 with a knight as he may find it rather difficult to extricate himself from the pin after ♗f4 without incurring damage.

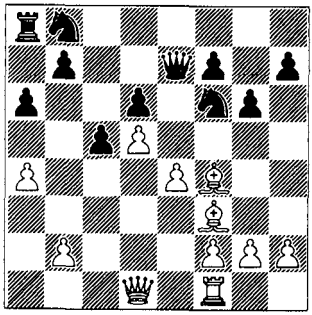
42



Opening the h1–a8 diagonal

Another fairly common tactical motif arises when White has a bishop placed on f3 and Black's b-pawn is unprotected, elements which generally occur after Black has carried out the simplifying manoeuvre ... ♗c8–g4xf3 *(43)*.

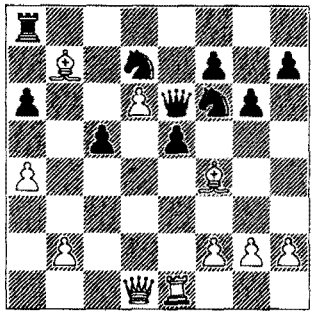
43



White can play e5 and regain the pawn by opening the long diagonal after, for example, ... dxe5, d6 ♕e6, ♖e1 ♘bd7, ♗xb7 *(44)*.

Black's queenside pawns have been shattered and the e5 pawn is

44

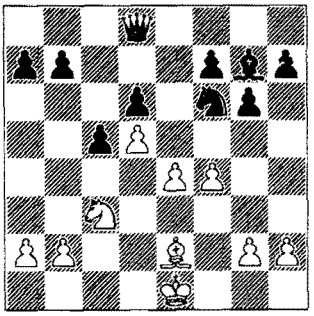


under fire. Moreover, with the d6 thrust White has obtained all the advantages of the positional sacrifice of the e-pawn mentioned above at no material cost.

The pseudo-sacrifice ... b7–b5

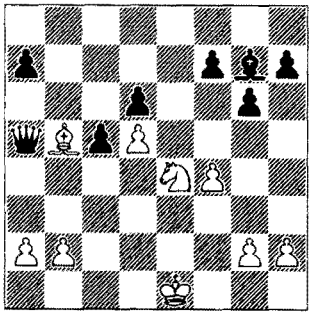
Black can sometimes utilize tactical means to speed through the thematic ... b5 thrust especially in variations where White delays castling *(45)*.

45



Here Black can play ... b5, after which the capture ♘xb5 would leave the e-pawn unprotected, whilst the alternative ♗xb5 would be met by ... ♘xe4, ♘xe4 ♕a5+ *(46)*,

46



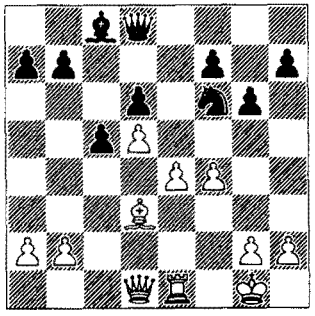
recovering the piece, since the parry ♘c3 is answered by ... ♗xc3+ followed by ... ♕xb5.

The a7–g1 diagonal

Black often uses the a7–g1 diagonal to set up various types of combination many of which are based on threatening to get a knight to f2 *(47)*.

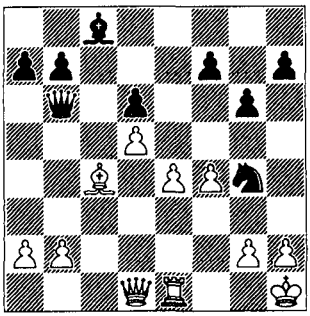
The diagram gives a skeleton example designed to show the

47



dangers associated with a rapid opening of the a7–g1 diagonal. Black makes the forcing sacrifice ... c4 and after ♗xc4 there follows ... ♕b6+, ♔h1 ♘g4 *(48)*.

48



Faced with both the classic smothered mate in four (... ♘f2+, ♔g1 ♘h3+, ♔h1 ♕g1+!, ♖xg1 ♘f2) and the fork on f2, White is in trouble.

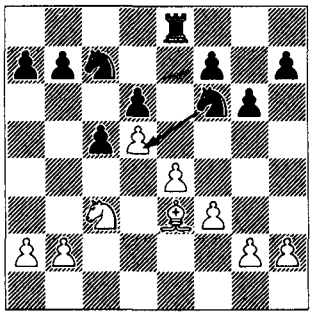
Sometimes Black can get his KB to the a7–g1 diagonal and this introduces various combinative pinning possibilities as we will see later on.

Pressure on the e-file

One very basic tactical theme is the pinning of White's e-pawn, which can render the d-pawn insufficiently protected *(49)*.

Whenever Black is exerting pressure with the heavy pieces along the e-file, White must pay particular attention not to leave any pieces unprotected or insufficiently protected on this file

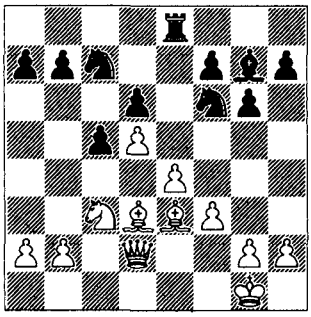
49



as otherwise it could cost him the d-pawn.

This theme, in conjunction with the preceding one, can produce quite sophisticated combinations *(50)*.

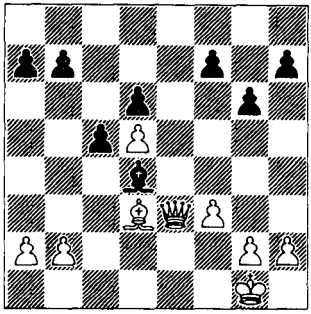
50



White's pieces are very naturally placed, but nevertheless Black can make a combination involving a double sacrifice: ... ♘fxd5!, ♘xd5 ♘xd5, exd5 ♖xe3!, ♕xe3, and Black finishes off by winning the queen with the pin ... ♗d4 *(51)*.

Such unpleasant surprises can be avoided by taking simple precautionary measures. Here, for

51



example, if White's king were on h1 or his KB on e2 Black would not have been able to carry out his combination.

3 Illustrative Games

Game 1

Portisch–Nunn

London 1982

Main Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**e6**
4	**♘c3**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**e4**	**g6**
7	**♘f3**	

The most important alternative at this point is 7 f4, after which White may choose between the Mikenas Variation (see the note to White's 8th move in Game 3), the Standard Four Pawns Variation (see Game 3), or the Bishop Check Variation (see Game 4). Other possibilities are the Sämisch System (7 f3, see Game 5) and the Penrose Variation (7 ♗d3, see Game 6).

The text move does not necessarily mean that White will leave his f-pawn untouched as he will be able to decide later on, after the thematic retreat ♘f3–d2, whether to play f3 or f4.

7	**...**	**♗g7**
8	**♗e2**	

The bishop is usually developed on this square because after 8 ♗d3 White would be more exposed both to the pin ... ♗g4 and sudden ... c4 advances.

In addition to the text move White could transpose into the Queen Check Variation by 8 ♕a4+ (see the note to Black's 7th move in Game 2) or the Uhlmann System by 8 ♗g5. In this latter case Black must be careful how he goes about unpinning his KN and exchanging the enemy QB. For example, 8 ... h6 9 ♗h4 a6! (threatening ... b5) 10 a4 g5 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 (this move is played before White has time to prevent it by ♘f3–d2) 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 ♘d2 ♘xg3 14 hxg3 ♘d7 with approximately balanced chances. Should Black forget to interpose the important prophylactic ninth move, however, he will be plunged into much sharper variations following 9 ... g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 (not

10 ... 0-0? 11 ♘d2 and Black can no longer exchange off White's bishop) 11 ♗b5+ ♔f8 (11 ... ♗d7 12 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 fails on account of 13 ♘e5! with clear advantage to White) 12 e5!? ♘xg3 13 fxg3 and now Black must defend himself with great precision, e.g. 13 ... a6 (after 13 ... dxe5 14 0-0 followed by ♘d2 White has a clear positional superiority in return for the pawn) 14 ♗d3 c4 15 ♗xc4 b5 16 ♗b3 ♕b6 17 ♕e2 g4!? 18 ♘h4 ♗xe5 19 ♖f1 ♔e8 with a double-edged position.

8 ... 0-0
9 0-0

Here too it is possible to transpose into the Uhlmann System by 9 ♗g5.

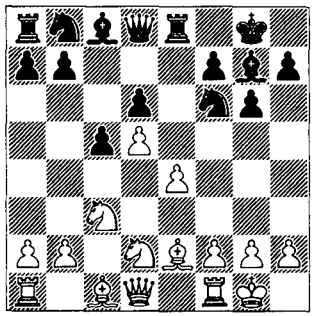
9 ... ♖e8

Alternatively, Black may begin the development of his queenside, the most important possibility being 9 ... a6 10 a4 ♗g4, for which see Game 2. Another playable variation is 9 ... ♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 11 a4 b6 whereby Black attempts to save the tempo... ♖e8 in comparison with the present game.

The text move implements one of the basic themes of the Modern Benoni: pressure against the pawn on e4.

10 ♘d2 *(52)*

52
B



10 ♕c2 would expose the queen to attack by ... ♘b8–a6–b4, e.g. 10 ... ♘a6 11 ♗f4 ♘b4 12 ♕b1 ♘h5 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♗e3 f5 15 a3 fxe4 and Black has nothing much to worry about.

The knight retreat protects the e-pawn, prepares the transfer to c4, and frees the way for the f-pawn.

At this point Black must decide how to mobilize his queenside forces. Basically, he has two plans: ... ♘b8–a6–c7 followed by ... b7–b6 (as we will see in the game), or ... ♘bd7–e5 — unless of course White transposes to the Standard Four Pawns by f4 — followed by ... g6–g5. Here is an example of this last line: 10 ... ♘bd7 (10 ... a6 11 a4 ♘bd7 is much the same) 11 a4 (for 11 f4 see Game 3) 11 ... ♘e5 12 ♕c2 (12 f4? is bad on account of 12 ... ♘eg4 and Black obtains the advantage after either

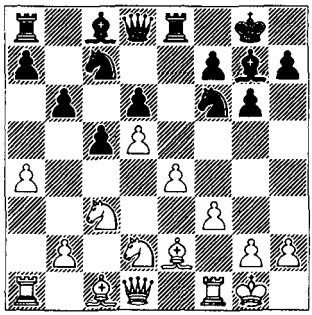
13 ♘c4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 15 ♕xg4 ♗d4+ or 13 ♖f3 ♘h5 14 ♕e1 f5 15 h3 ♗d4+ 16 ♔h1 ♘gf6 17 exf5 ♗xf5) 12 ... g5 13 ♖a3 a6 14 ♘d1 ♘g6 15 ♘e3 ♘f4 16 ♗d1 b6 17 f3 ♖b8 18 g3 ♘h3+ 19 ♔h1 b5, with a position rich in possibilities for both players.

10 ... ♘a6
11 f3

For 11 f4 see the note to White's tenth move in Game 3.

11 ... ♘c7
12 a4 b6 *(53)*

53
W



It goes without saying that when White plays f3 in place of f4 he has fewer possibilities of breaking through in the centre, but in compensation his pieces obtain greater mobility through being relieved of the task of protecting e4. This greater activity may manifest itself in various ways: in pressure against d6 by ♘c4 and ♗f4, in restricting the opponent by ♘c4, ♗g5 and ♕d2, or in a queenside demonstration by ♖b1 and b4.

For his part, Black will try to expand either on the queenside by ... a6 and ... b5 or on the kingside with ... f5. White sometimes plays the double-edged advance g2–g4, simultaneously discouraging and challenging Black to advance his f-pawn. Here, then, we have a very rich position open to various interpretations by both players.

13 ♔h1

White may also continue more energetically with 13 ♘c4, e.g. 13 ... ♗a6 14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗e3 ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 17 ♕d2 ♔h7 18 ♖ab1 ♕d7 19 b4 b5 20 ♗e2 c4 21 ♖be1 with quite a promising position.

13 ... ♖b8
14 ♘c4 ♗a6

Black is ready to meet ♗f4 by ... ♗xc4.

15 ♗g5 ♕d7

This brings extra control to b5 and prepares ... ♗xc4 followed by ... a6 and ... b5. The immediate attempt to mobilize the pawn majority by 15 ... ♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 a6 would be frustrated by 17 ♕d3 ♕c8 18 ♗f4 ♗f8 19 ♖ab1, and

after b4 White would have the preferable game.

16 b3

A strategic choice whereby White dampens Black's queenside play by giving himself the possibility of recapturing on c4 with a pawn, which would definitively rule out enemy expansion. Another option was 16 ♖b1 ♗xc4 17 ♗xc4 a6 18 b4 b5 19 ♗d3 c4 20 ♗c2 bxa4! 21 ♗xa4 ♘b5 with equal chances.

16 ... ♘h5

Recognizing that his queenside play has been stymied, Black changes strategy radically and frees the path for his f-pawn in preparation for counterplay on the kingside. The discovered attack on White's QN gains Black an important tempo.

17 ♖c1

17 ♕d2 would have led to a very complicated position after 17 ... ♗xc3!? 18 ♕xc3 ♘xd5.

17 ... f6

Black takes advantage of the opportunity to chase away the enemy bishop.

18 ♗e3 f5

A fairly typical position: Black threatens to gain control of e5 and obtain a dangerous initiative on the kingside by ... f4.

19 g4

A thematic attempt to wrest the initiative on the kingside by opening up the f-file which White hopes to be the first to exploit. To realize the classic plan of a central breakthrough White would have to be prepared to sacrifice a pawn, e.g. 19 f4 ♗xc4 20 bxc4 ♘f6 21 e5 dxe5, with a very complicated and unclear position where the dynamism of the passed d-pawn, plus the possibility of opening up the h2–b8 diagonal by fxe5, provides a lot of compensation.

19 ... ♗xc4

19 ... f4? would cost Black a pawn after the simple retreat 20 ♗d2.

20 bxc4 fxg4
21 fxg4 ♘f6

Note that if Black had not driven away White's QB on the 17th move his knight would now be trapped.

22 ♗f3

White has successfully fought for space on the kingside and stopped Black's queenside play, but these gains have been made at the cost of a considerable weakening of his pawn structure since a4,

c4 and e4 are all weak to varying degrees. Black has obtained control of e5 and has the sounder pawn structure.

22	**...**	**♕e7**

Putting pressure on e4 and freeing d7 for the manoeuvre ... ♘f6–d7–e5.

23	**♗g5!**	**h6**
24	**♗h4!**	**g5**
25	**♗e1**	

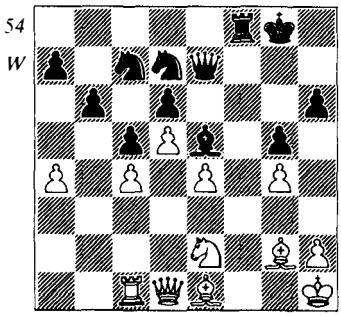
Concluding a very important bishop manoeuvre aimed at weakening f5.

25	**...**	**♖f8**
26	**♗g2**	**♘d7**
27	**♖xf8+?**	

With this exchange White begins a plan which cannot, in fact, be completed, namely to occupy f5 with his knight by ♘c3–e2–g3–f5. The f5 weakness should have been exploited immediately by 27 ♖f5! after which 27 ... ♖xf5 28 exf5 would have produced a position where any result would be possible.

After the text move White will no longer be able to rid himself of the weakness on e4.

27	**...**	**♖xf8**
28	**♘e2**	**♗e5!** *(54)*



The position has something of a blocked character, which can easily show the knights off to advantage; for example if now 29 ♘g3 ♗xg3! and the knights will prove more effective than the bishops. Nor can White clear the way for his knight by first playing 29 ♗g3, because after 29 ... ♗f4! 30 ♗xf4?! gxf4! the knight would still be denied access to g3 and Black's position is obviously advantageous. Equally 29 ♗c3 ♗f4! would be to no avail. These variations demonstrate exactly why White's 27th move was mistaken.

29	**♕d3**	**♘e8**

Bringing the QN back into play.

30	**♗d2**	**♕g7**
31	**♖f1**	**♖xf1+**
32	**♗xf1**	**♕f7**
33	**♔g2?**	

In trying to prevent the black queen getting to f2 White makes a mistake which costs a pawn since now the ♗f1 can no longer protect the e-pawn from g2. It was better to play 33 ♗g2 allowing

33 ... ♕f2 with a slight advantage to Black.

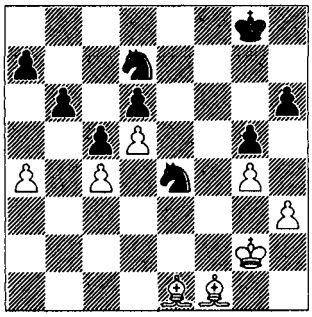
33	**...**	**♘ef6**

Not 33 ... ♗xh2? 34 ♕h3! simultaneously threatening the bishop and the h-pawn.

34	**h3**	**♕g6**

Sealing the fate of the e-pawn since 35 ♔f3? ♗a1! would be disastrous.

35	**♘c3**	**♗xc3**
36	**♗xc3**	**♕xe4+**
37	**♕xe4**	**♘xe4**
38	**♗e1** *(55)*	



On 38 ♗b2? there would follow 38... ♘e5 and the threat of... ♘d2 would oblige White to capture on e5 giving Black an easily won ending.

An instructive endgame where the bishop pair appears insufficient to offset the pawn minus; Black has excellent winning chances.

38	**...**	**♘e5**
39	**♗e2**	**♔f7**
40	**♗f3**	

White's last real hope of making a draw lies in exchanging his bad bishop.

40	**...**	**♘f6**
41	**♗e2**	**♘g6**
42	**♗f1**	

After 42 ♔f3? ♘h4+ 43 ♔f2 ♘e4+ 44 ♔e3 (44 ♔g1 ♔f6 permits the entry of the black king via e5) 44 ... ♘g2+ 45 ♔xe4 ♘xe1 and the good knight versus bad bishop ending is won for Black.

42	**...**	**h5!**

The correct strategy as it favours the knights to reduce the pawns to one wing only.

43	**gxh5**	

White would be reduced to zugzwang after 43 ♔g3? hxg4 44 hxg4 ♘e5 45 ♗e2 ♘e4+ 46 ♔g2 ♔f6 47 ♗f3 ♘xf3 48 ♔xf3 ♔f5 49 ♔e3 a5!

43	**...**	**♘xh5**
44	**♔f3**	**♘e5+**
45	**♔e4**	**♔g6**
46	**♗e2**	**♘f6+**
47	**♔e3**	**♔f5**
48	**♗c3**	**a6**
49	**♗e1?!**	

Allowing Black to liquidate the

kingside pawns. The best chance was to prevent the ... g4 advance by 49 ♗b2, after which Black would have had to play ... ♘e8–c7 with ... b5 to follow.

49	**...**	**g4!**
50	**hxg4+**	

After 50 h4 the pawn would be very weak.

50	**...**	**♘fxg4+**

Now the knights trample everything in their path.

51	**♔d2**	**♔e4**
52	**♔c3**	**♔e3**
53	**♗d1**	**♘f3**
54	**♗g3**	

White would also be lost after 54 ♗xf3 ♔xf3 55 ♗h4 ♔e2 56 ♗d8 ♘f2 57 ♗xb6 ♘e4+ 58 ♔c2 ♔e3 59 ♗a5 ♔d4 60 ♔b3 ♔d3 followed by ... ♘d2+.

54	**...**	**♘f2**
55	**♗c2**	**♘g5**
56	**♔b2**	**♘ge4**
57	**♗h4**	**♔d4**
58	**♗b3**	**♘d3+**
59	**♔a3**	**♘e5**

0–1

Game 2

Portisch–Kasparov

Moscow 1981

Main Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**

Delaying the advance ... c5 for a move can be useful in limiting the opponent's choice of variations. This order of moves, in fact, allows Black to avoid facing the aggressive lines involving f4 and also gives Black the choice of playing, say, the Nimzo-Indian after 3 ♘c3 and the Benoni after 3 ♘f3.

3	**♘f3**	**c5**
4	**d5**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**♘c3**	**g6**
7	**♗f4**	

White postpones declaring his central structure. After the text move, as also after both 7 ♗g5 or 7 ♘d2, White may continue either with e4 (which will result in a simple transposition to the classical Centre) or with e3 establishing the Restricted Centre (for which see Chapter 3).

It may be observed that when White plays ♗f4 combined with e4 he has two basic plans in mind: to try to exploit the weakness of d6 and to effect a rapid central breakthrough with e5.

7	**...**	**a6**

By this means Black avoids the Queen Check Variation although the delay in castling leaves Black somewhat more vulnerable to a quick e5 break. The standard 7 ... ♗g7, on the other hand, enables

White to try and exploit the weakness of d6: 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕b3 ♕c7 (for the dynamic continuation 9... b5!?, whereby Black offers his d-pawn, see the note to White's 7th move in Game 9) 10 e4 (it is worth noting that this position can also be reached by the move order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕b3 ♕c7 10 ♗f4) 10 ... 0-0 11 ♘d2 ♘h5 12 ♗e3 f5 (12 ... ♗d4!? is worth attention) 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♗e2 ♗e8 15 0-0 ♘d7 with a slight pull for White.

8 a4

White has an interesting alternative in 8 e4!? b5 (on 8 ... ♗g7 White can transpose to a favourable version of the Queen Check Variation by 9 ♕a4+ ♗d7 10 ♕b3, and in comparison with the preceding note Black has played the passive ... a6 in place of ... 0-0 which can lead to difficulties, e.g. 10 ... b5?! — White is also better after 10 ... ♕c7 11 e5! or 10 ... ♕e7 11 ♗e2! — 11 ♗xd6 b4 12 ♘d1! ♘xe4 13 ♕e3 ♗f5 14 ♗xc5 ♕xd5 15 ♖c1 with clear advantage to White) 9 ♕e2 threatening to rupture the centre with a thematic pseudo-sacrifice on d6, e.g. 9 ... ♗g7? 10 ♗xd6! ♕xd6 11 e5 ♕e7 12 d6 ♕e6 13 ♘g5 ♕g4 14 f3! ♕xg5 15 exf6+ ♔f8 16 ♕e7+ ♔g8 17 ♕e8+ ♗f8 18 ♕xc8 with a decisive advantage, or 9 ... ♕e7? 10 ♗xd6! ♕xd6 11 e5 ♕e7 12 exf6 with a marked advantage to White. Nor would 9 ... ♘bd7? 10 e5 be any great improvement.

Black does better to answer 9 ♕e2 with 9 ... ♗e7 (9 ... ♘h5 also comes into consideration), e.g. 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 e5!? ♘g4 12 ♘e4 dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♘d7 15 ♗f4 ♖e8, with a double-edged position in a variation which is clearly open to improvement.

8 ... ♗g7
9 e4

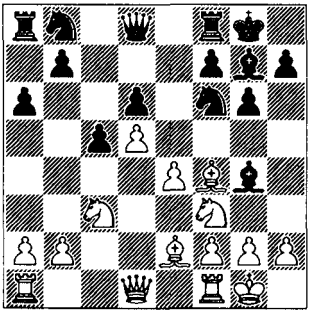
Establishing the Classical Centre. For Black, the unique problem associated with this order of moves is that he has been deprived of the possibility of playing lines with ... ♘b8–a6 as we examined in the previous game. White has not achieved this *gratis*, however, as he has been forced to declare his plans for his QB at an early stage.

9 ... ♗g4

After the move ... a6 it is clear that this is the only sensible development for Black's QB, just as equally the QN will go to d7.

10 ♗e2 0-0
11 0-0 *(56)*

56
B



We have transposed to a line of the Main Variation normally reached by the move order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 ♗g4 11 ♗f4. If we imagine that the diagrammed position had been reached by this move order then it is clear that at this point White could well choose an alternative to 11 ♗f4. The main possibility is 11 ♗g5, e.g. 11 ... ♗xf3 (11 ... ♘bd7 is also possible as is 11 ... h6 12 ♗h4 ♘bd7, either in case waiting for White to move his KN in order to be able to exchange the QB for White's K B rather than the KN) 12 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 13 ♕d2 ♖e8 14 a5 c4 15 ♖a4 ♕c7 16 ♕f4 and White stands better since Black is tied not only to the defence of the ♘f6 but also to the pawns on d6 and c4.

11 ... ♖e8

The major alternative here is 11 ... ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 which can lead to great complications if Black continues with 12 ... ♕e7. Let's take a look: 13 e5!? (of course White can also continue positionally with 13 ♖e1, e.g. 13 ... ♘bd7 14 ♗g5! h6 15 ♗h4 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘fd7 18 ♕b3! intending to continue with the manoeuvre ♘d1-e3-f5) 13 ... dxe5 14 d6 ♕e6 15 ♖e1 ♘bd7 16 ♗xb7 where it appears that Black can defend himself satisfactorily by 16 ... ♖a7! in a rather difficult position to evaluate.

With the text move — or the analogous 11 ... ♕e7 — Black encourages the opponent to protect his e-pawn by ♘f3–d2 so as to exchange his QB for the enemy counterpart instead of a knight.

12 ♘d2

White can also play 12 ♕c2 in order to force Black to capture the KN, e.g. 12 ... ♕c7 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 with approximately equal chances.

12 ... ♗xe2
13 ♕xe2

Now White threatens 14 ♘c4 with awkward pressure against d6.

13 ... ♘h5

The usual method of forcing the enemy QB to abandon the h2–b8 diagonal.

14 ♗e3 ♘d7

14 ... ♗d4!? is an interesting way of seeking further simplification since if White captures on d4 the ♘c3 has no good square to go to.

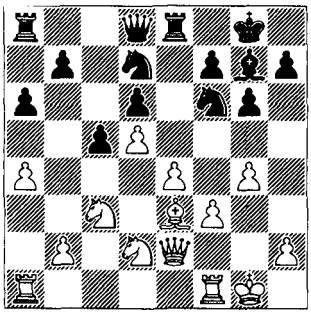
15 g4

A thematic advance, in this case achieved with gain of tempo. A frequently seen alternative is 15 a5.

15 ... ♘hf6
16 f3 *(57)*

White could also have prepared the advance f4 by playing 16 h3 (16 f4 h5 17 g5 ♘g4 is good for Black) e.g. 16 ... h5 17 g5 ♘h7 18 f4 when White has a more aggressive but also more exposed position than that which he obtains in the present game.

57
B



A critical moment. Since Black is unable to challenge White's pawns with ... f5, he normally seeks to develop counterplay on the queenside as soon as possible. Let's see various possibilities: (1) 16 ... ♕c7 17 a5 b5 18 axb6 ♘xb6 (Black now threatens a typical combination, namely 19 ... ♘fxd5! 20 exd5 ♖xe3 21 ♕xe3 ♗d4 winning the queen) 19 ♔h1 ♕b7 20 ♖a3 (to protect the knight on its journey to a5 via b3) 20 ... ♘fd7 21 ♘b3! ♘e5 22 ♘a5 ♕c8 with chances for both sides; (2) 16 ... b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 19 ♕xb5 (not 19 ♘xb5? ♘xd5! 20 exd5 ♗d4 21 ♘c4 ♕a6 22 ♘c7 ♖xe3! with advantage to Black) 19 ... ♘e5 with a position where it is difficult to establish the extent of Black's compensation for the pawn.

16 ... h6?!

This move indicates that in contrast to the preceding examples Black wishes to hold up White's kingside play and secure the position of the knight on e5 by ... g5. Black soon realizes, however, that queenside activity is vital for his survival.

17 ♔h1 ♘e5
18 ♖g1

If now 18 ... g5?! then White can choose between an immediate breakthrough by f4 or the slower, more positional approach of manoeuvring a knight to f5 before commencing direct action.

18 ... b5!

Black has twigged that it is not possible merely to restrain White by playing ... g5 and begins his queenside counterplay in the nick of time.

19 g5!

The most energetic continuation. Other lines promise White little, e.g. 19 f4 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♕xc4 ♖b8 with sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, or 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘xb5 (not 20 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 21 ♘xb5 ♕a6 22 ♘c3 ♕xe2 23 ♘xe2 ♘xf3! 24 ♘xf3 ♖xe4 with advantage to Black) 20 ... ♕b6 and here too Black has satisfactory play for the pawn.

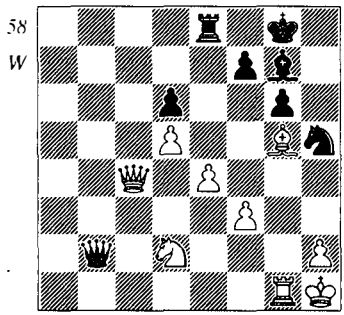
19 ... hxg5
20 ♗xg5 c4

Now White is faced with the difficult choice of whether to continue with the attack on the kingside or to win a pawn on the queenside. He opts for the latter but it turns out that Black is able to whip up a surprisingly strong initiative.

21 axb5

21 f4 ♘d3 22 f5 b4 would have plunged the game into a maelstrom of complications.

21 ... axb5
22 ♖xa8 ♕xa8
23 ♘xb5 ♕b8
24 ♘a3 ♕xb2
25 ♘axc4 ♘xc4
26 ♕xc4 ♘h5! *(58)*



Following this virtually forced sequence Black remains a pawn down, but his pieces are very active and White's king is rather vulnerable.

27 ♕c6

Seeking to increase his material advantage since the single pawn plus is not guaranteed to secure victory, e.g. 27 ♕b3 ♕xb3 28 ♘xb3 f5 29 exf5 gxf5 30 ♗h6 ♖e5 31 ♘d4 ♔f7 and Black will in fact regain his pawn.

27 ... ♖b8

Black is unable to protect his d-pawn, e.g. 27 ... ♕e5 28 ♘c4 or 27 ... ♕b8 28 ♖b1.

28 ♕xd6

Acknowledging that winning

the queen by 28 ♖b1 ♕xb1+ 29 ♘xb1 ♖xb1+ 30 ♔g2 ♗e5 would not necessarily win the game.

28 ... ♗e5

Even though he is now two pawns down Black is still not lost thanks to the activity and co-ordination of his pieces.

29 ♕d7 ♕d4
30 ♕g4 ♖b2
31 ♖d1

Black would meet 31 ♕xh5 with 31... ♕xg1+ 32 ♔xg1 gxh5, after which White too would have to be careful.

31 ... ♕d3
32 ♕c8+ ♔g7
33 ♕c4 ♕a3
34 ♕e2 ♕a4?!

An inaccuracy in time-trouble. It was indeed necessary to avoid 34... ♘f4? 35 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 36 ♘c4 winning, but 34 ... ♕a2! was a better way, e.g. 35 ♗e3 ♘f4 36 ♕f1 (not 36 ♕c4? ♖xd2 etc.) 36 ... ♖c2 and White is unable to disentangle himself.

35 ♖b1! ♖a2
36 ♗e3 ♕d7!

The black queen switches attacking fronts.

37 ♕f2 ♕h3
38 f4?!

Simplification by 38 ♗d4 ♗xd4 39 ♕xd4+ ♔h7 would not have solved all White's problems, but 38 ♕g2 would have been more precise. The natural-looking text move permits Black to play an astonishing drawing combination.

38 ... ♗c3
39 ♗d4+ ♗xd4
40 ♕xd4+ ♔h7
41 ♖g1

After 41 ♕f2? ♘f6! Black's initiative would be too dangerous.

41 ... ♔g8!

Not 41 ... ♘xf4? 42 ♕f2 and Black would be in trouble. This retreat is the key to Black's idea.

42 d6

White can do nothing to avoid the opponent's next move since 42 ♖g2? ♘xf4 43 ♖f2 ♘h5 would simply lose a pawn without diminishing Black's initiative one jot. Now some magic touches the chessboard.

42 ... ♖xd2!
43 ♕xd2 ♕f3+
44 ♕g2 ♘g3+!
45 hxg3 ♕h5+
46 ♕h2 ♕f3+
47 ♖g2 ♕d1+
48 ♕g1 ♕h5+
49 ♖h2 ♕f3+

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Game 3
Ritov–Tal
Tallin 1979
Standard Four Pawns Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**e6**
4	**♘c3**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**e4**	**g6**
7	**f4**	

This move is evidently the most direct way of mobilizing the pawn majority, and moreover denies Black use of e5. White's basic plan is to force through e4–e5, thus opening up attacking possibilities against the opponent's king and also obtaining a passed pawn on d5. Whilst the text move energizes White's kingside majority it has the drawback of somewhat weakening both the e-pawn and the king's position.

7	**...**	**♗g7**
8	**♘f3**	

The Mikenas Variation, 8 e5, is not as dangerous as it appears at first sight, but the defence must be conducted with a sang-froid that does not balk at losing the right to castle. For example, 8 ... ♘fd7 9 ♘b5 dxe5 10 ♘d6+ ♔e7 11 ♘xc8+ ♕xc8 12 ♘f3 (12 d6+ ♔f8 13 ♘f3 e4 14 ♘g5 h6 15 ♘xf7 — 15 ♘xe4 ♕e8 16 ♕e2 ♘c6 is advantageous for Black — 15 ... ♔xf7 16 ♗c4+ ♔f8 17 f5 ♘c6 does not seem to give White sufficient attack for the piece) 12 ... ♖e8 13 ♗c4 (13 fxe5 is an important alternative, e.g. 13 ... ♘xe5 14 ♗b5 ♘bd7 15 0-0 ♔f8 16 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♗f4 c4! and now after 18 ♗xd7 ♕c5+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xd5 20 ♕g4 f5 Black emerges with a material advantage, and 18 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♔h1 ♕c5 20 ♗a4 ♖d8 is also good for Black, whilst 18 ♕d4 ♖f5 19 ♕xc4 ♘b6 is approximately equal) 13 ... ♔f8 14 0-0 e4 15 ♘g5 ♘b6 16 ♗b5 ♖d8 17 ♘xh7+ ♔g8 18 ♘g5 c4! and Black's position is preferable.

The most important alternative to the text move is the Bishop Check Variation, 8 ♗b5+, for which see Game 4.

8	**...**	**0-0**
9	**♗e2**	

It is worth noting that in this variation White develops his pieces in the same way as in the Main Variation, the only difference being that here he has played f4 whereas there White usually plays f3. It should also be observed that this position is frequently reached by a transposition of moves from the Four Pawns Variation of the King's Indian Defence: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3

♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f4 0-0 6 ♗e2 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 cxd5.

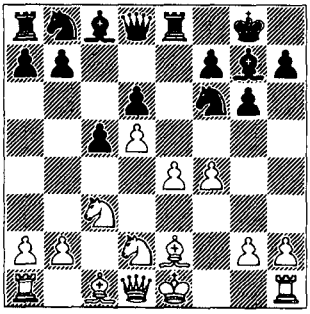
9 ... ♖e8

Black can use the tactical features of the position to play 9 ... b5 as the pawn cannot be advantageously captured because of 10 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 or 10 ♗xb5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ etc. However, this continuation must reckon with the immediate central breakthrough 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 ♗g5 with a position which practice has shown to contain considerable difficulties for Black.

10 ♘d2 *(59)*

10 e5!? dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 ♗g5 is a very complicated possibility, but here, in comparison with the preceding note, Black has made the useful move ... ♖e8 in place of ... b5.

59
B



This is the basic starting position of the Standard Four Pawns Variation which may usefully be compared with the parallel position in the Main Variation (see diagram 52). Black has three principal continuations: 10 ... ♘bd7, 10 ... ♘a6 — both of which, after 11 0-0, produce positions which could also be obtained via transposition in the Main Variation — and 10 ... c4, which, in contrast, can only arise from this move order. The first of these is examined in the game and here we give some brief analysis of the other two:

(1) 10 ... ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘c7 12 a4 a6 (12 ... b6 followed by ... ♗a6 is also possible) 13 ♗f3 ♖b8 14 ♘c4 b5 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♘a5 (or 16 ♘xd6!? ♕xd6 17 e5 with complicated play) 16 ... ♗d7 17 e5 dxe5 18 d6 and White has sufficient dynamic compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

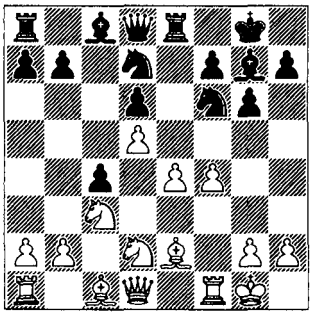
(2) 10 ... c4 11 a4 (if 11 ♗xc4? ♘xe4 with advantage to Black, whilst if 11 0-0 b5! and of course the pawn cannot be captured because of the check on b6) 11 ... ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♘c5 13 ♗f3 b6 (this line has similarities with that in the present game; Black could also play 13 ... ♗h6) 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♘xc4 ♖f5 (compare this position with that in the featured game after White's 16th move) 17 d6 ♖b8 18 ♘b5! ♗e6 19 ♘e3 ♗b3 20 ♘xf5! ♗xd1 21

♘e7+ ♔h8 22 ♖xd1 and White has sufficient compensation for the queen.

10 ... ♘bd7
11 0-0

It may be interesting to note that the actual move order of the present game was as follows: 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 d4 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 g6 6 ♘c3 ♗g7 7 e4 0-0 8 ♗e2 d6 9 0-0 ♖e8 10 ♘d2 ♘bd7 11 f4.

11 ... c4 *(60)*



A pawn sacrifice quite in the spirit of the Modern Benoni. After White has played f4, the weakest point in his position — and at the same time the strongest — is the pawn on e4: weak, because it can no longer be protected by the natural f3, and strong because of its constant threat to advance. The text move is designed to prevent White from simply protecting e4 and developing in such a way as to make the e5 break a real possibility, and this it achieves by quickly introducing tactical elements by freeing c5 for the knight so as to increase the pressure on e4 before White has completed his development. The strategic ideal for Black would be to exchange his c-pawn for White's e-pawn as would be the case in the variation 12 ♘xc4? ♘xe4 after which White's centre is destroyed (13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♘xd6?? is unplayable because of 14 ... ♕b6+).

12 ♔h1

The simplistic 12 ♗f3? is unsatisfactory because the opening of the a7-g1 diagonal permits Black the riposte 12 ... b5! In addition, the attempt to accept the sacrifice and hang on to the pawn would allow Black various tactical possibilities, e.g. 12 ♗xc4?! ♘c5 13 ♕f3 ♗g4 and now on 14 ♕g3 there would follow 14 ... ♘cxe4 15 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 (the weakness of White's back rank would be fatal after 16 ♕xg4 ♕b6+ 17 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 18 ♖xf2 ♕xf2) 16 ... ♖xe4 17 ♗d3 ♕b6+ 18 ♔h1 ♗e2 and Black stands better.

12 ... ♘c5
13 e5

The pawn cannot be defended by 13 ♕c2? because of 13 ... ♘fxe4! 14 ♘cxe4 ♗f5 15 ♗f3 ♕e7 16

♖e1 ♗xe4 17 ♗xe4 f5 regaining the piece with advantage. Since it would be disadvantageous for him to accept a simple static exchange of e-pawn for c-pawn White decides to force a dynamic change in the pawn structure.

13 ... dxe5
14 fxe5

On 14 ♘xc4 the best continuation appears to be 14 ... exf4 (14 ... e4 has been tried) 15 ♗xf4 ♘ce4! with a complicated position rich in possibilities for both players.

14 ... ♖xe5
15 ♘xc4

Both sides have achieved their objectives to some extent. White has obtained a mobile passed pawn and the half-open f-file while Black has largely destroyed the enemy centre and can try to build an attack against White's king.

15 ... ♖f5

Immediately seeking to neutralize White's pressure along the f-file. Black could also play 15 ... ♖e8 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗h4 ♘ce4 with chances for both sides.

16 ♗f3

It seems that 16 ♗f4 is well met by 16 ... g5! (but not 16 ... ♘xd5? 17 ♘e3 and wins), e.g. 17 ♗e3 ♘ce4 18 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♗f3 ♘f6 20 d6 g4 and Black has somewhat the better of it.

16 ... ♘g4

Black alertly seizes the tactical opportunity to open the d8–h4 and h8–a1 diagonals to create attacking chances. The immediate threat is 17 ... ♘xh2 18 ♔xh2 ♕h4+.

17 ♘e3

After 17 ♗xg4 ♖xf1+ 18 ♕xf1 ♗xg4 White would constantly have to bear in mind the possibility of Black winning the d-pawn following the capture ... ♗xc3. With the move played White gets on with his queenside development in order to connect the rooks as quickly as possible and thereby, hopefully, regain control of the f-file should a pair of rooks be exchanged.

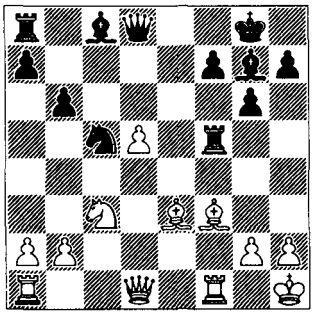
17 ... ♘xe3
18 ♗xe3

It looks as though White has advantageously enhanced his development and that the passed d-pawn is more dangerous than Black's nebulous attacking prospects.

18 ... b6 *(61)*

With this little move Black harmonizes the action of all his forces

61
W



which up to this point had seemed somewhat disjointed. Now Black can develop the QB on a6 from where it can collaborate with the ♘c5 to take control of d3 and with the ♖f5 to control f1 and thus potentially the f-file. Of course, it would be mistaken now for White to cede the bishop pair and the dark squares by 19 ♗xc5? bxc5; nor would 19 d6? do any good on account of 19 ... ♗a6! and the pin on White's KB gives the black QR time to move to c8.

19 ♕c2?

White does not realize the danger he is in and makes a natural move freeing d1 for the KR in order to reinforce the d-pawn and keep d3 under control. Subsequently, it was found that White's best line here is 19 ♗d4! intending to answer 19 ... ♗.a6 with 20 ♗xg7 and now if 20 ... ♗xf1 then 21 ♕d4 with excellent attacking chances, and if 20 ... ♔xg7 then 21 b4 with the idea 21 ... ♗xf1 22 bxc5 ♗a6 23 c6 it is difficult to imagine that Black will be able to cope with the connected passed pawns. Still, who knows what Tal would have come up with if he had had to face this move?

19	**...**	**♗a6**
20	**♖fd1**	**♗e5**

Signals the beginning of the kingside attack.

21	**♗d4**	**♕h4**
22	**♗xe5**	**♖xe5**

White is clearly in considerable trouble given Black's threats to double on the e-file and to play ... ♘d3.

23 g3

This natural-looking move seems to be necessary, but now the ♗f3 can no longer blockade the f-file.

23	**...**	**♕f6**
24	**♗g2**	**♖ae8**
25	**♕d2**	

Seeking to relieve the pressure through exchanges on the e-file. It is interesting that White has never been able to find the time to make something of his passed d-pawn, and here too the advance would be useless because of 25 d6 ♗d3 26 ♕d2 ♕xd6 27 b4 ♘a6 28 ♗f1

(if 28 ♕xd3? ♖e1+ 29 ♗f1 ♕xd3 and wins) 28 ... ♕c6+ 29 ♗g2 ♕c4 etc.

25	**...**	**♖f5**
26	**♖e1**	**♖xe1+**
27	**♖xe1**	**♘d3**
28	**♖e8+**	**♔g7**
29	**♔g1**	

Parrying the threatened mate on f1 and hoping for the trap 29 ... ♕d4+ 30 ♕e3 ♕xe3+ 31 ♖xe3 ♘xb2 32 d6 ♗c8 33 ♗h3 ♖c5 34 d7. However, Black can now decide the game with a simple combination exploiting the convergence of his pieces on f1.

29	**...**	**♘xb2!**
30	**h3**	**♘c4**
31	**♕e1**	**♕d4+**
32	**♔h2**	**♘e5**
33	**♘e2**	**♕b2**
34	**♘g1**	**♗f1**

0-1

Game 4

Kasparov–Nunn

Lucerne Olympiad 1982

Bishop Check Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**
3	**♘c3**	**c5**
4	**d5**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**e4**	**g6**
7	**f4**	**♗g7**
8	**♗b5+**	

For a long time it was thought that both of the natural replies to this check — 8 ... ♗d7 and 8 ... ♘bd7 — were unplayable on account of allowing White to break through advantageously in the centre with 9 e5. Consequently, the most artificial response — 8 ... ♘fd7 — was deemed obligatory and this originally constituted the *raison d'être* of the whole variation. Indeed, as we will see in the game, faced with White's latest refinements Black does not find it easy to develop his queenside satisfactorily after playing 8 ... ♘fd7.

Recently, therefore, Black has dusted off the 8 ... ♘bd7 line and White has encountered much greater difficulty than expected in demonstrating an advantage. After 9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♘h5 11 e6 ♕h4+ 12 g3 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♕xh1 (on 13 ... ♕xg3+ 14 ♔d2 ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♕g2+ 16 ♘e2 ♕xd5+ 17 ♔c2 White's extra piece plays a more important role than Black's pawns) White has tried two possibilities:

(1) 14 exd7+ ♗xd7 15 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♕g4+ f5 17 ♕a4+ ♔c8 18 ♗e3 ♗xc3+ 19 bxc3 ♕xd5 20 ♖d1 ♕c6! with approximately balanced chances in a difficult position.

(2) 14 ♗e3 ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♕e4 16 ♕f3 ♕xf3 17 ♘xf3 fxe6 18

dxe6 0-0 19 exd7 ♗xd7 20 ♗xd7 ♖xf3 with an ending where Black should be able to maintain the balance with precise play.

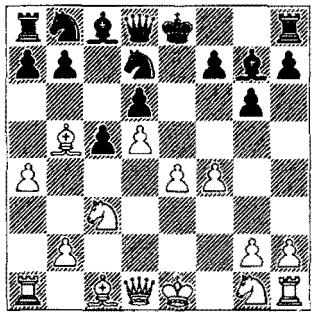
Only further practical tests will be able to determine whether this variation is really playable.

8 ... ♘fd7

The normal reply with which Black increases his control of e5 and threatens to chase off the bishop and expand on the queenside with gain of tempo by ... a6 and ... b5.

9 a4 *(62)*

62
B



White can also consider allowing Black to realize his ambitions for queenside expansion in a similar fashion to analogous lines in the Penrose Variation (see Game 6), e.g. 9 ♘f3 a6 10 ♗d3 b5 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♔h1 ♖e8 13 ♗c2 (13 e5!? dxe5 14 f5 is an interesting thematic sacrifice of the e-pawn which gives sufficient compensation) 13 ... c4 (or 13 ... b4 14 ♘e2 a5 intending to continue with ... ♗a6) 14 ♗e3 ♘f6 15 ♗d4 ♗g4 (15 ... b4? 16 ♘a4 ♘xe4 17 ♘b6 costs Black material) 16 a3 ♘bd7 17 ♕d2 ♗xf3 18 ♖xf3 ♖c8 with a position possibly somewhat in White's favour.

The text move is the most logical continuation as it contains Black's queenside counterplay and keeps his pieces on that wing bottled up. Generally speaking, White wants to delay the retreat of the ♗b5 until Black forces it by ... a6 as this impedes the development of the QN on that square and obliges Black to lose a tempo by moving his KN again in order to get his queenside pieces out. For example, 9 ... 0-0 10 ♘f3 a6 11 ♗e2 ♘f6?! and we have transposed into a version of the Four Pawns Variation where White has gained a tempo since Black has lost two moves with his KN whereas the manoeuvre of the KB has cost White only one tempo.

In addition to the text continuation, Black has experimented with various other moves from the above diagrammed position which we summarize as follows:

(1) 9 ... 0-0 10 ♘f3 a6 11 ♗e2 ♖e8 12 0-0 ♘f8 13 e5 ♗g4 (13 ... ♘bd7 14 ♘g5 dxe5 15 f5 ♘f6 16 g4! gives White the slightly better chances) 14 ♘g5 ♗xe2 15 ♕xe2

dxe5 16 f5 e4! and Black has guaranteed his pieces some freedom and should be able to avoid incurring any great disadvantage.

(2) 9 ... ♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕e7 11 ♘f3! 0-0 (11 ... ♗xc3+? 12 bxc3 ♕xe4+ 13 ♔f2 is good for White) 12 0-0 ♘a6 13 e5 (White can also go for an attacking position by 13 ♖e1 ♘b4 14 e5 a6 15 ♗f1 dxe5 16 d6 ♕e8 17 fxe5) 13 ... ♘b4 14 ♘e4 ♘b6 15 ♘xd6 ♘6xd5 16 ♗d2 ♗g4 17 ♕b3 ♖ad8 18 ♗c4 and White's advantage is evident.

(3) 9 ... a6 10 ♗e2 (10 ♗d3 is also possible, e.g. 10 ... ♕c7 11 ♘f3 c4 12 ♗c2 ♘c5 13 0-0 ♗g4 14 ♗e3 0-0 15 ♗d4 with probably somewhat the better chances for White, or here 10 ... ♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕d8 with similar play to the line under consideration) 10 ... ♕h4+ 11 g3 ♕d8 (11 ... ♕e7?! 12 ♘f3 ♗xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♕xe4 14 0-0 is too dangerous for Black) 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 0-0 ♖e8 and Black prepares the tortuous unravelling of his queenside, e.g. 14 ♖e1 ♘f8 15 ♗f1 ♗g4 16 h3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♘bd7 18 ♗d2 ♖c8 19 b3 and White has an obvious spatial advantage and the better chances.

It is essential to bear in mind that these variations are merely examples of possible developments and are almost certainly open to improvement on both sides.

9 ... ♘a6

Given that the most dangerous lines are those in which White achieves the e5 breakthrough, Black constructs a plan specifically designed to counter this possibility. The idea behind the text move is to bring the QN to b4 in order to discourage White's KB from retreating to d3 after the subsequent ... a6 and thereby persuade it to go to e2 where it obstructs the pressure which White will try to exert along the e-file by ♖e1. With the hindsight of the present game it may be observed that this plan is dubious as it obliges Black to fatally delay castling.

10 ♘f3 ♘b4

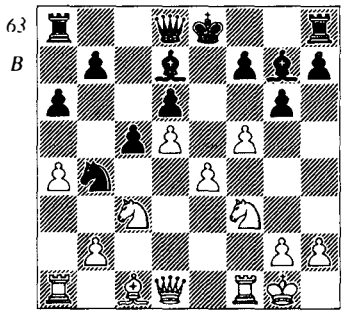
The knight could also go to c7 in order to put prophylactic pressure on d5 directed against White's central breakthrough. For example, 10 ... 0-0 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 ♖e1 ♘c7 13 ♗f1 ♖e8 14 ♗e3 ♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♘f6!? (15 ... ♖xe4?! would cost time and expose Black to a powerful kingside attack) 16 e5 ♘fxd5 17 ♗f2 dxe5 18 fxe5 b6 19 ♗h4 ♕d7 and it is clear that White has promising attacking chances in return for his sacrificed pawn and compromised pawn structure.

11 0-0 a6?!

In order to implement his plan consistently Black is obliged to play this move immediately, since after 11 ... 0-0 White can prepare an ideal retreat for the KB on f1 by playing 12 ♖e1! To develop this line a bit further, after 12 ... a6 13 ♗f1 ♖e8 14 h3 it is by no means easy to find a satisfactory plan of defence for Black, e.g. 14 ... ♕c7 15 ♕b3 f5 16 ♗d2 ♘f8 17 e5 with a pronounced superiority for White, or 14 ... b6 15 ♗e3 ♗b7 16 ♗f2 ♖c8 17 ♕d2 c4 18 e5 dxe5 19 ♘e4 and White will win material. To sum up, the overriding impression is that the entire plan with ... ♘a6–b4 is dubious.

After the move played it seems that Black's plan has succeeded since the KB would not be well placed on c4 either, e.g. 12 ♗c4 0-0 13 ♗e3 ♘b6! and Black solves the problem of the development of his queenside. However, White finds an unexpected alternative which introduces a violent attack.

12 ♗xd7+! ♗xd7
13 f5! *(63)*



This initially strange-looking method of pursuing the attack renounces the central e5 breakthrough but opens the c1–h6 diagonal for the QB and maximizes the activity of all the white pieces. The key to the attack lies in the fact that Black has not yet castled and this prevents Black from thinking in terms of counter-attack, e.g. 13 ... c4 14 ♗g5 ♕b6+ 15 ♔h1 ♘d3 16 f6 ♗f8 17 a5! ♘f2+ 18 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 19 ♘a4! and White has ample positional compensation for the exchange given that 19 ... ♗xa4 20 ♕xa4+ ♔d8 21 e5! would be crushing. Nor dare Black risk breaking up his kingside structure by 13 ... gxf5, e.g. 14 ♗g5 ♗f6 (after 14 ... f6?! 15 ♗f4 ♕c7 16 ♘d2! ♘d3 17 ♗xd6! ♕xd6 18 ♘c4 White regains the piece with a winning position) 15 ♗f4 0-0 16 e5! (but not 16 ♗xd6? ♗xa4!) 16 ... dxe5 17 ♘xe5 and White dominates the board.

13 ... 0-0

The best and — given the variations in the preceding note — perhaps only chance to survive.

14 ♗g5 f6

If Black moves the queen White

plays f6, whilst on 14 ... ♗f6 there comes 15 ♕d2! after which the exchange of dark-squared bishops seriously weakens Black's position and White's advantage becomes still clearer, e.g. 15 ... ♗xg5 16 ♘xg5 f6 (Black is paralysed after 16 ... h6? 17 f6!) 17 ♘e6 ♗xe6 18 dxe6.

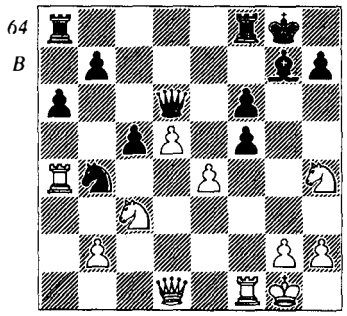
15 ♗f4 gxf5?

Fearing suffocation Black resorts to a radical means of procuring a measure of simplification. The move played undoubtedly aggravates matters, but it seems that Black's position is already seriously compromised and the alternatives would probably do little more than postpone the inevitable. For example: (1) 15 ... ♕e7 16 fxg6 (16 ♖e1 is a convincing alternative positional approach) 16 ... hxg6 17 ♘h4 ♔h7 18 ♗g3! and now on 18 ... b5?! would come 19 ♕b1! c4 20 ♘xg6! ♔xg6 21 ♗xd6 winning; (2) 15 ... g5 16 ♗xd6 ♗xa4 17 ♖xa4 ♕xd6 18 e5! fxe5 19 ♘xg5 b5 and now White could obtain a crushing advantage with either 20 ♖xb4 ♘xb4 21 ♘ce4 or 20 ♖a3.

16 ♗xd6 ♗xa4

16 ... ♖e8 17 ♗xc5 fxe4 18 ♘d4 ♘d3 19 ♘xe4 ♘xb2 was better although White would keep a marked advantage. In the game, Black is now hoping for 17 ♖xa4 ♕xd6 18 exf5 which would give him a breathing space to coordinate his pieces, but a rude surprise awaits him.

17 ♖xa4 ♕xd6
18 ♘h4! *(64)*



This move starkly highlights the weakest point in Black's position, namely f5. The arrival of a white knight on that square makes defence impossible as it not only creates major threats against the king but also forces Black to relinquish his blockade of the d-pawn.

18 ... fxe4
19 ♘f5 ♕d7

19 ... ♕e5 is hopeless after 20 ♕g4 ♖f7 (the queen is lost after either 20 ... ♕c7 21 d6 ♕d7 — or 21 ... ♕f7 — 22 ♘h6+) 21 ♘h6+.

20 ♘xe4 ♔h8

On 20 ... ♖ae8 comes 21 ♕g4

♔h8 (forced because of the threatened ♘h6+) 22 ♘xc5 and the ♘b4 falls.

21 ♘xc5 1–0

After 21 ... ♕xd5 22 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♘e6 White wins the exchange and the rest is a matter of technique.

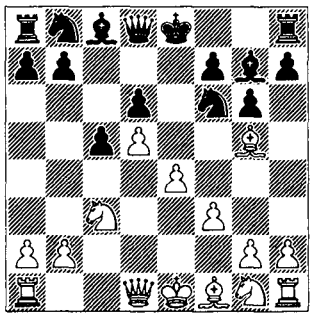
Game 5
Gulko–Kasparov
USSR 1981
Sämisch System

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**
3	**♘c3**	**c5**
4	**d5**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**e4**	**g6**
7	**f3**	

One evident effect of playing this move early on is that White can no longer play the standard manoeuvre ♘g1–f3–d2, and indeed the deployment of virtually all the white pieces is different from that which we have seen so far. White intends to develop the QB and queen on the c1–h6 diagonal, either by ♗e3 and ♕d2 or, more commonly, ♗g5 and ♕d2, thereby obtaining the possibility of exchanging the opponent's fianchettoed bishop. As for the kingside, there are basically three possible set-ups: (1) ♘g1–e2–g3 (or c1) and ♗f1–e2; (2) ♘g1–h3–f2 and ♗f1–e2; (3) ♗f1–d3 and ♘g1–e2. White will normally castle short as the queenside is too exposed.

7 ... ♗g7
8 ♗g5 *(65)*

65
B



This is the basic starting position of the Sämisch System, from which there develops an intricate network of complicated variations where Black normally castles quickly and gets out of the pin on the KN by playing either ... h6 or ... ♕a5. Here and in the following note we give a few examples of the many possibilities:

(1) 8 ... 0-0 9 ♕d2 ♗d7 10 ♗d3 ♘a6 11 ♘ge2 ♖b8 12 0-0 (12 a4 ♘b4 13 ♗c4 a6 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 ♕xb6 also leads to complicated play) 12 ... b5 13 ♘g3 c4 14 ♗e2 ♘c5 with a double-edged position.

(2) 8 ... h6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♕d2 h5 11 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 12 ♘c1 ♘e5 13 ♗e2 ♘h7 14 0-0 ♕e7 with roughly balanced chances.

Let us note in passing that almost all of these and the following variations can occur via the King's Indian Defence: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗g5 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 cxd5 etc.

8	**...**	**a6**
9	**a4**	**♘bd7**

Black here deliberately delays castling as he has conceived the idea of placing a knight on e5 and securing it by ... h6 and ... g5 and wants to avoid his king coming under attack by h4. This is a novel plan and it is much more usual for Black to continue as indicated in the preceding note. Some further examples:

(1) 9 ... h6 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♕d2 ♖e8 (or 11 ... ♘h7 12 ♘ge2 — 12 ♗xh6?? ♕h4+ — 12 ... ♘d7 13 ♘g3 h5 14 ♗e2 h4 15 ♘f1 f5 with mutual chances) 12 ♘ge2 (12 ♗xh6? ♘xe4! and after ... ♕h4+ Black regains the piece advantageously) 12 ... ♘bd7 13 ♘c1 (after 13 ♗xh6?! ♘xe4! 14 ♘xe4 ♕h4+ 15 g3 ♕xh6 16 ♕xh6 ♗xh6 17 ♘xd6 ♖e3 Black has a lot of compensation for the pawn) 13 ... h5 14 ♗e2 ♘h7 15 ♘d3 ♘e5 16 ♘f2 ♗d7 17 0-0 ♖c8 18 h3 f5 19 f4 ♘f7 with an extremely rich position.

(2) 9 ... 0-0 10 ♕d2 ♕a5 (threatening ... b5) 11 ♖a3 ♕c7 12 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 13 ♘g3 c4 14 ♗e2 ♘e5 15 ♗e3! h5 16 0-0 ♗d7 17 a5 ♖fe8 18 ♗b6 ♕c8 19 ♗d4 with the better prospects for White.

10	**♘h3**	

We remind the reader that normally, as we have seen in the preceding notes, the KN is developed to g3 via e2, after which Black is discouraged from following up ... h6 with ... g5 because of the easily exploitable weaknesses on f5 and h5. Instead, even though he has castled, Black will seek to harass the knight by ... h5–h4 as illustrated in the foregoing examples.

The text move, made possible through the blocking of the ♗c8, aims to place the knight on f2 from where it can both join in a kingside attack and cover the potentially weak square d3.

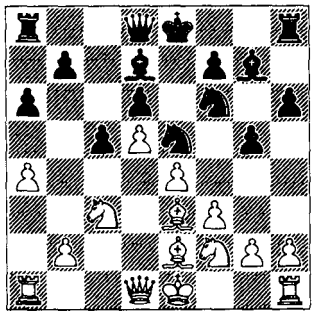
10	**...**	**h6**

Now that White has committed his KN Black implements his plan of occupying e5.

11	**♗e3**	**♘e5**
12	**♘f2**	**♗d7**
13	**♗e2**	

Threatening f4.

13 ... g5 *(66)*



Now the importance of Black's delaying castling can be appreciated: if he were already castled in this position then White would be able to launch a ferocious attack by ♕d2 and h4. Given that 14 f4 gxf4 15 ♗xf4 ♕e7 is no cause for concern for Black, White turns his attention to the queenside.

14 ♕d2

This move obviously prevents the opponent castling kingside and also, less obviously, prepares queenside action as will become apparent over the next few moves.

14 ... ♕e7

Given the weakening of his kingside Black sensibly keeps the queen centralized.

15 a5

White aims to profit from the absence of a black knight on d7 by cramping the opponent's queenside with ♘c3–a4–b6 in preparation for the opening of lines by b2–b4.

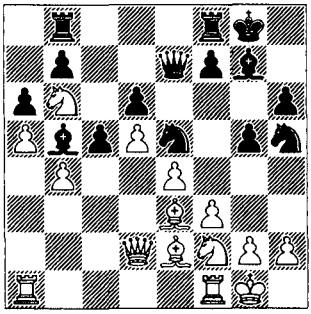
15 ... ♖b8
16 ♘a4 ♘h5?!

With this nervous reaction, seeking quick counterplay with ... f5 but abandoning the queenside, White reaps the first fruits of his subtle strategy of also delaying castling. Faced with the prospect of slow strangulation on the queenside (of course, capturing the equine intruder by ... ♗xa4 would not only cede the bishop pair and weaken the white squares but also help White play b4) and unable to castle, it is understandable that Black panics and tries to lash out. The best solution to Black's difficulties lay in 16 ... ♗b5 intending to meet 17 ♘b6 by 17 ... ♘fd7, although even here White could obtain somewhat the better of it by playing 17 0-0 intending to exploit the weakness on f5 by the manoeuvre ♘h1!–g3.

17 ♘b6 ♗b5
18 0-0 0-0
19 b4! *(67)*

This thrust poses Black dreadful problems as the opening up of the queenside clearly favours White, e.g. 19 ... ♗xe2 20 ♕xe2 ♘d7 (or 20 ... cxb4 21 ♖ab1 and White

67
B



will recapture the pawn with an enduring positional advantage) 21 ♖ac1 ♘xb6 22 axb6 and Black cannot maintain the pawn on c5 by, say, 22 ... ♖bc8 because of 23 bxc5 dxc5 24 ♕c4 and the pawn falls. Black therefore decides to keep the queenside as closed as possible by leaving the c-pawn to its fate with ... c4 and throwing everything into a kingside counter-attack.

19	**...**	**c4**
20	**♖ac1**	**f5**
21	**♘xc4**	

White, having won a pawn, has now the task of fending off Black's initiative on the kingside.

21	**...**	**♗xc4**
22	**♗xc4**	**g4!**

Here 22 ... f4? 23 ♗d4 would be too slow.

23	**fxg4**	

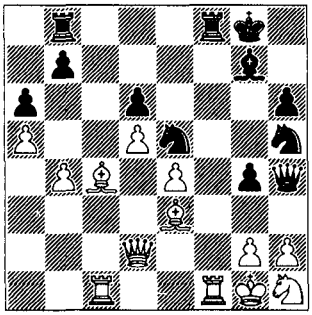
After 23 f4 ♘xc4 24 ♖xc4 g3 25 hxg3 ♘xg3 26 ♖fc1 fxe4 Black would at least have regained his pawn.

23	**...**	**fxg4**

A critical moment: Black threatens to dangerously expose White's king by ... g3.

24	**♘h1!**	**♕h4** *(68)*

68
W



Black has conjured up a considerable attack but White refuses to panic and defends precisely.

25	**♗e2!**	**g3**
26	**♘xg3**	

Avoiding the trappy 26 hxg3? ♖xf1+ 27 ♖xf1 ♕xe4! 28 ♗xh5 ♘c4 and Black regains the piece and keeps his attack.

26	**...**	**♘xg3**
27	**hxg3**	**♕xe4**
28	**♖xf8+**	**♖xf8**
29	**♗f4!**	

This defensive move seals Black's fate at a stroke: the f-file

is blocked and Black's knight is denied access to g4 and tied against the d-pawn. Now White is ready to turn his control of the c-file to account.

29	**...**	**h5**
30	**♖c7**	

Looking not only at the b-pawn but also at Black's king.

30	**...**	**♕b1+**
31	**♕c1**	**♕g6**
32	**♕c2**	**♕e8**

Black is forced to give ground as only by keeping the queens on the board can he maintain a last flicker of hope.

33	**♕e4**	**h4**
34	**gxh4**	**♕d8**

On 34 ... ♘g6 White wins by 35 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 36 ♗h5.

35	**♖xb7**	**♕c8**

Realizing that 35 ... ♕xh4 would be met by 36 ♖xg7+! ♔h8 (36 ... ♔xg7 37 ♗xe5+ and wins) 37 g3 and wins.

36	**♖e7**	**♕d8**
37	**♗g5**	

1–0

Game 6

Knaak–Tseshkovsky

DDR v USSR, 1982

Penrose Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**e6**
4	**♘c3**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**e4**	**g6**
7	**♗d3**	

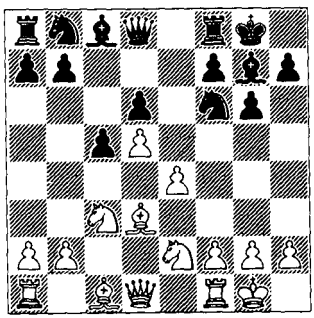
This placing of the KB on d3 is rarely seen in the Modern Benoni, except in the Penrose Variation, where it plays a specific role in White's attacking plans.

7	**...**	**♗g7**
8	**♘ge2**	**0-0**
9	**0-0** *(69)*	

In the actual game this position was reached by a different move order: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♘c3 d6 5 e4 ♗g7 6 ♗d3 0-0 7 ♘ge2 e6 8 0-0 exd5 9 cxd5.

69

B



This is the basic starting position of the Penrose Variation in which White deploys his pieces with the intention of launching an attack on the kingside.

White's build-up begins with the

thematic moves f4 and ♘g3 and culminates in the positional sacrifice of the e-pawn by e5 followed, after ... dxe5, by the thrust f5. In such cases White can use the important central blockading square e4 together with the possibilities along the f-file to work up an attack which can easily become overwhelming. The f4 advance normally requires a degree of care in its preparation, notably by h3 which not only prevents the simplifying ... ♗g4 but also the attacking ... ♘g4 in conjunction with a sudden ... c4 and ... ♕b6+.

From Black's point of view, the absence of the annoying enemy knight on c4 means that he can develop his queenside counterplay more easily without having to worry about pressure on d6. Basically, he may choose either to simply try and activate his pawn majority or to counter White's threatened e5 by pressurizing the d5 point by developing the QN to either c7 or b4 via a6. Alternatively, Black may opt for rapid occupation of e5 by ... ♘f6–g4–e5.

From the vast nexus of variations possible from the position in diagram 69 we present the following:

(1) 9 ... a6 10 a4 ♕c7 11 h3 ♘bd7 12 ♘g3 c4 13 ♗c2 ♖b8 14 ♗e3 ♘c5 15 f4 b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 e5 and Black's queenside play balances White's central action.

(2) 9 ... ♖e8 10 h3 ♘a6 11 ♘g3 ♘c7 12 a4 b6 13 ♖e1 ♗a6 14 f4 ♗xd3 15 ♕xd3 a6 and Black has reduced the opponent's attacking potential at the cost of delaying his own counterplay.

(3) 9 ... ♘a6 10 f3 (Here we give an example of an alternative interpretation of the Penrose Variation which has been developed recently and obviously has many similarities with the Sämisch System. A similar interesting possibility is 10 a3, e.g. 10 ... ♘c7?! 11 b4! ♘d7 12 f3 b6 13 ♖b1 ♘e5 14 ♗c2 and White stands better. Of course, White may also play the original plan based on f4.) 10 ... ♘c7 (10 ... ♘b4!? also comes into consideration) 11 ♗g5 a6 12 a4 ♗d7 13 a5 ♖b8 14 ♘a4 ♗xa4 15 ♖xa4 b5 16 axb6 ♖xb6 17 b3 ♕b8 18 ♗c2 with perhaps a slight advantage to White.

(4) 9 ... ♘g4 10 h3 ♘e5 11 ♗c2 ♘a6 12 f4 ♘c4 13 b3 (13 ♗d3 ♘a5 14 ♘g3 c4 15 ♗e2 ♘c5 is also interesting) 13 ... ♘a5 14 ♗e3 b5 with chances for both sides.

9 ... b6

Intending to challenge White's bishop by ... ♗a6.

10 a4

White does not want to allow the exchange of bishops and thereby reduce his attacking potential so he prepares to answer 10 ... ♗a6 with 11 ♘b5! after which 11 ... ♗xb5 12 axb5 would leave White with a clear positional superiority. The text move, which noticeably weakens the b4 square, indicates that White intends to go all out for a kingside attack. It is also possible to follow an entirely different strategy, similar to the Saemisch System, by 10 f3 ♗a6 11 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 12 ♗g5.

10 ... ♘a6

Intending ... ♘b4 obliging the KB to retreat to b1 where it interferes with the communication between the heavy pieces.

11 h3 ♘b4
12 ♗b1 ♖e8

In anticipation of White's f4 advance Black puts e4 under pressure and seeks control of e5.

13 ♗g5

This pin, which can play a vital role in White's subsequent attack, is aimed at provoking ... h6 thereby weakening g6 and giving added force to his basic idea of the positional sacrifice e5 followed by f5.

13 ... h6

Otherwise White will play ♕d2 and it will no longer be possible to chase away the bishop.

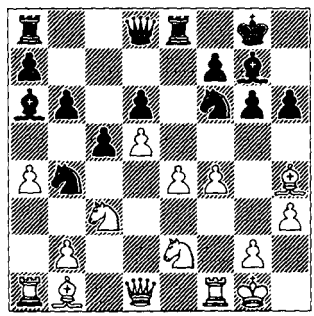
14 ♗h4!

After 14 ♗e3 Black can successfully counter White's plans by tactical means, e.g. 14 ... ♗a6 15 ♕d2 (15 f4? ♘fxd5! 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♕xd5 ♗xe2 etc.) 15 ... ♔h7 16 ♖e1 (on 16 f4?! comes 16 ... ♘xe4! 17 ♗xe4 ♗xe2 18 ♕xe2 f5 and Black regains the piece as the KB dare not retreat on pain of ... ♖xe3) 16 ... ♖e7 with balanced prospects. The maintenance of the pin and threat of f4 causes Black far more problems.

14 ... ♗a6?

An automatic move which fails to appreciate the positional advantage White has after playing f4. The radical 14 ... g5 was mandatory.

15 f4 *(70)*


70
B

Now that White has succeeded in playing f4 and maintaining the annoying pin Black will have to constantly be on his guard against e5 breakthroughs.

15 ... ♕d7

Black is understandably anxious to get out of the pin and is banking on his pressure against d5 preventing White from playing e5, e.g. 16 e5 dxe5 17 f5? g5 followed by capturing the d-pawn. White's next move, which is perfectly consistent with his 14th, highlights the strategic defects of Black's position with deadly clarity.

16 ♗xf6!

Simultaneously reducing the pressure on d5 and the efficacy of a ... g5 response to a subsequent f5.

16 ... ♗xf6
17 e5!

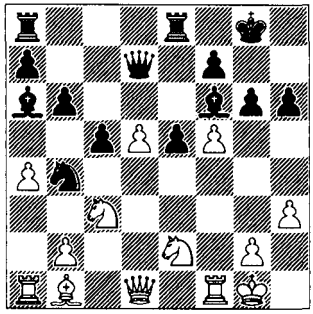
The thematic positional sacrifice of the e-pawn.

17 ... dxe5

After 17 ... ♗g7 White would have the pleasant choice between a violent continuation of the attack by 18 e6 or the less hurried 18 ♖f2.

18 f5 *(71)*

71
B



The culmination of the attack: Black's extra pawn is merely a hindrance to the defence and the threats against g6 pose significant danger to the black monarch. The extent of Black's problems is such that he cannot even try to give back the pawn by 18 ... e4 because of the following fine variation: 19 fxg6 ♗d4+ 20 ♘xd4 ♗xf1 21 ♘xe4! ♘xd5 22 ♕xf1 cxd4 23 ♗a2!! with a decisive attack, e.g. 23 ... ♖xe4 24 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 25 gxf7+ ♔f8 26 ♗xd5.

18 ... ♗xe2

Hoping to improve on the preceding variation by obtaining d4 for the KB, e.g. 19 ♕xe2 e4 20 fxg6 ♗d4+ 21 ♔h1 fxg6 22 ♗xe4 ♔g7 with balanced chances in a complicated position.

19 ♘xe2!

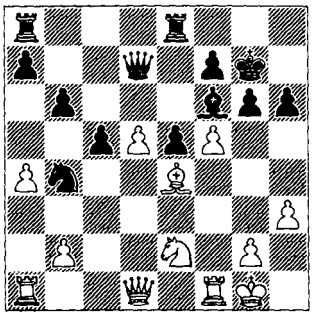
Scotching Black's hopes.

19 ... ♔g7

Black is understandably reluctant to defend the clearly inferior ending arising after 19 ... ♕xd5 20 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♗a2 ♖ad8 (not 21 ... ♘e3 22 fxg6) 22 fxg6 ♔g7 23 gxf7 when 23 ... ♔xf7 loses a piece to 24 ♖ad1. The passive text move, however, permits White to establish a crushing blockade and retain the attack.

20 ♗e4 *(72)*

72
B



The strategic objectives of White's positional pawn sacrifice have been realized to perfection: the blockade of the e5 pawn paralyses the black pieces and the pressure against his king's position can easily be increased. Black is totally without counterplay and moreover cannot seek refuge in closing the position by 20 ... g5 because after 21 ♘g3 ♕d8 (White wins quickly after 21 ... ♗d8 22 f6+) 22 d6! ♖b8 23 d7! ♖f8 (or 23 ... ♖e7 24 ♘h5+ etc.) 24 ♕d6! and wins. This variation illustrates very clearly that in fact Black faces two major problems, the pressure against his king and the mobility of the passed d-pawn.

20 ... ♗g5

20 ... ♖ad8 would be answered by 21 ♖a3 and Black cannot capture the d-pawn.

21 ♖a3 ♗f4
22 ♘xf4

22 f6+ followed by g3 would also win.

22 ... exf4
23 ♖xf4 ♖xe4

Desperation.

24 f6+ ♔f8
25 ♖xe4 ♘xd5
26 ♕d2 ♘xf6

Nor would 26 ... g5 help: 27 ♖d3 ♕f5 28 ♖e1 ♘xf6 29 ♖f1 and the subsequent ♖df3 would force a decisive penetration on the f-file.

27 ♕xh6+ ♔g8
28 ♖h4 ♘h5
29 ♖g3!

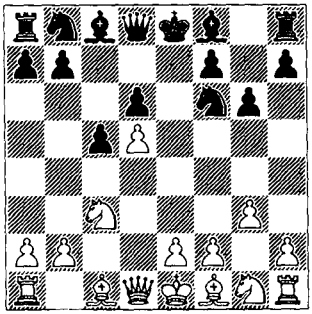
1–0

2 The Fianchetto Centre

Main Variation: Fianchetto Variation

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 g3 g6 *(73)*.

73
W



The same basic strategic outlines apply when White plays the fianchetto before developing the QN, e.g. 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 and now:

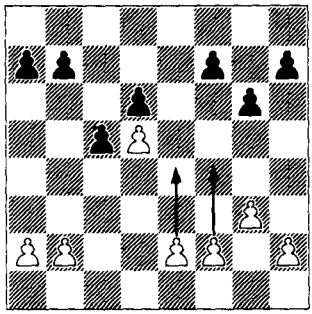
Accelerated Fianchetto Variation

4 g3 exd5 5 cxd5 b5 6 ♗g2 d6

1 Strategic Ideas

Fianchettoing does not mean that White has given up ideas of mobilizing his kingside majority but simply that he intends first of all to secure his king's position before expanding in the centre by the usual advances e4 and f4 *(74)*.

74



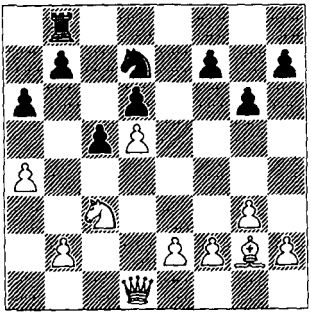
Most of the ideas for both players examined in the preceding chapter also apply here, and therefore in what follows we will concentrate on the principal strategic differences brought about by White's fianchetto.

The reduced control of b5

The development of White's KB on g2 facilitates the mobilization

of Black's queenside pawn majority since White has less control over b5 than in the variations where the KB is developed on the f1–a6 diagonal *(75)*.

75



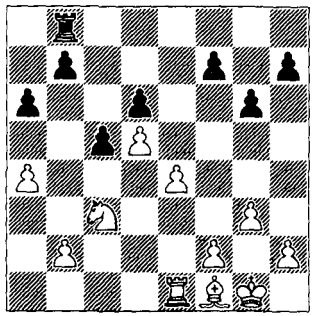
In such situations it is usually sufficient for Black to prepare the ... b5 advance with the thematic moves ... a6 and ... ♖b8 as it is difficult for White to hold things up successfully by ♕d3 or ♕b3. In the first case White's queen is exposed to attack by ... ♘e5, and in the second Black will probably be able to play ... b5 anyway, since the capture axb5 axb5, ♘xb5 would leave White in a nasty pin. To regain control of b5 White will have to play e4 and retreat the KB to f1 *(76)*.

It is obvious, however, that this manoeuvre is rather artificial and difficult to carry out if Black takes suitable measures in time.

The c6 square

Usually, therefore, White is

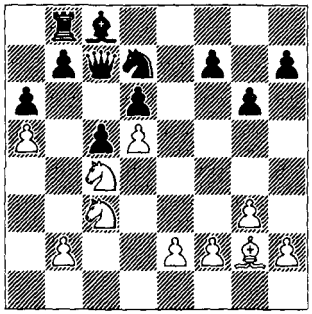
76



obliged to try to cope with rapid queenside expansion by the opponent, the effects of which can be particularly unpleasant in those variations where the KN has been played to c4. In order to avoid having simply to retreat the ♘c4, and to make something of the control exercised over c6 by the KB, White often provokes the ... b5 advance at a suitable moment when he can obtain specific positional compensation.

White begins with the thematic advance a5 *(77)*.

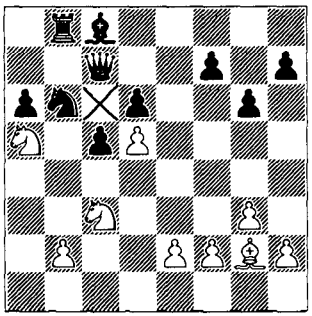
77



Clearly, Black cannot allow his queenside play to be stifled and

therefore plays ... b5 anyway. After axb6 ♘xb6 — in such circumstances a knight on d7 is indispensable in order to play ... b5 — White avoids exchanging knights and tries instead to exploit the weakness of c6 by the manoeuvre ♘c4–a5–c6 *(78)*.

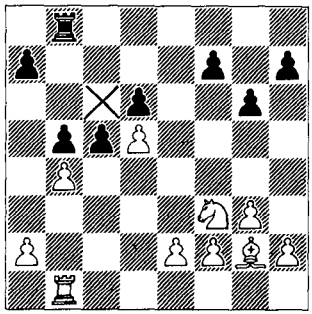
78



White's fianchettoed bishop allows him to occupy c6 even if Black contests it by ... Bd7 since the exchange on c6 would give White a passed pawn there, access to d5, the open d-file against the weak pawn on d6, and increased activity for the KB along the long diagonal, all of which elements render White's position considerably more dynamic.

White also has another method of meeting Black's pawn advance which we have already encountered, namely to allow ... b5 to be played and then to counter it by b4 *(79)*.

79



When the KB has been fianchettoed, the advance b4 takes on particular significance in so far as White wants to uproot the black c-pawn (forcing ... c4 or ... cxb4) in order to gain d4 for his KN and plant it on c6.

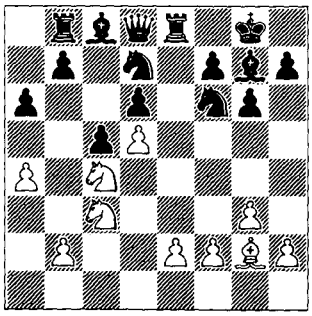
The reader will recall that this strategy can be applied whether or not there are pawns on a2 and a7, the exchange of which can easily occur after the moves ... a6 and a4.

Challenging the ♘c4

Given that Black must almost always play his QN to d7 in order to neutralize the effects of the cramping a4–a5 (cf. diagram 77), it often happens that White's KN occupies c4 with an immediate attack on the d6 pawn *(80)*.

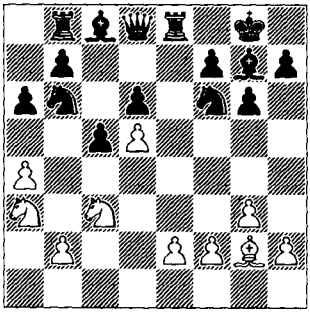
In this type of position it is not possible to defend the d-pawn by ... ♘e8, and ... ♗f8 is too passive, whilst ... ♕e7 is often not the best square for the black queen.

80



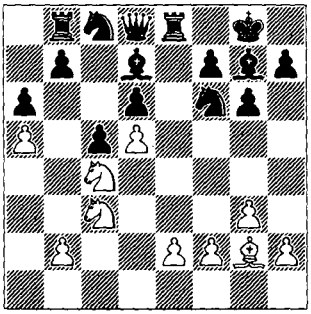
Consequently, Black usually defends his pawn by moving the ♘d7 to either b6 or e5 which also has the advantage of challenging the ♘c4. In either case, however, White can retreat to a3 which gives greater control of b5. Black thus finds it impossible to expand immediately and instead, according to whether he has played ... ♘b6 or ... ♘e5, employs one of two plans *(81)*.

81



White threatens a5 followed anew by ♘c4 re-establishing the pressure against d6. By playing ... ♗d7 Black vacates c8 for the QN and organizes his pieces in such a way as to retain the possibility of queenside expansion. If White pushes on with a5 and ♘c4 then the ♘c8 protects d6 and Black is ready to eliminate the ♘c4 by ... ♗b5 *(82)*.

82

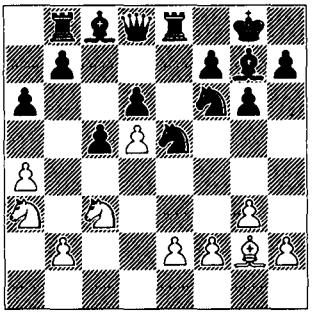


The ... b5 advance is still unplayable at the moment because the ♘c8 is tied to the defence of the d-pawn but, after ... ♗b5xc4, expansion becomes possible and the ♘c8 can get back into play via a7 and b5.

When Black defends the d-pawn by ... ♘e5 on the other hand, there arises a situation after the retreat ♘a3 where subsequent strategic developments are determined by the black knight's presence on e5 *(83)*.

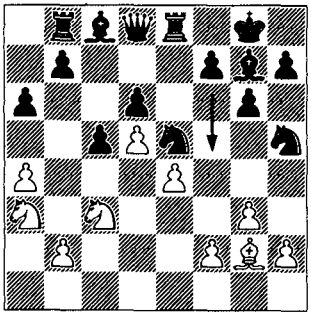
White has held up ... b5 and is on the point of mobilising his own pawns by e4 and f4 with gain of tempo. This obliges Black to alter his strategy radically and suspend

83



queenside play in favour of preparing to meet White's pawn advance by ... f5, and to this end he plays ... ♘h5 *(84)*.

84

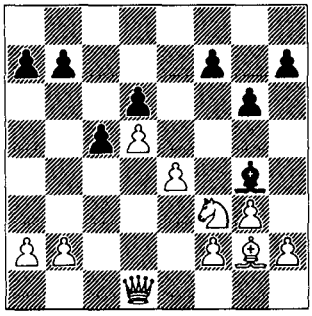


Given that Black has switched his counterplay to the kingside a head-on confrontation is almost inevitable. The advances e4 and f4 increase White's dynamic possibilities but, as we shall see, permit Black to whip up tactical chances against the weakened enemy king's position.

The prophylactic h2–h3

As we have seen from the previous example, White's kingside fianchetto does not rule out the implementation of the basic plan of a central breakthrough. However if White plays e4 early on, without taking any precautions, Black can seize the right moment to pin the ♘f3 by ... ♗g4 *(85)*.

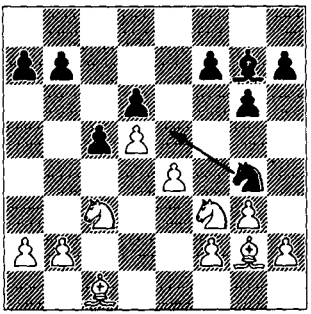
85



In the variations where White develops his KB on e2 he can easily meet this pin by ♘d2, but here it is much more awkward since Black can try to get a knight to e5 and, besides, even if the simple exchange ... ♗xf3 proves necessary, neither the queen nor the bishop would be well placed on f3.

Black can also make use of g4 by means of the manoeuvre ... ♘f6–g4–e5 which often leads to the exchange of White's KN whether it is on f3 or c4 *(86)*. Should White now try to avoid the exchange of knights by answering ... ♘e5 by ♘d2, Black is able

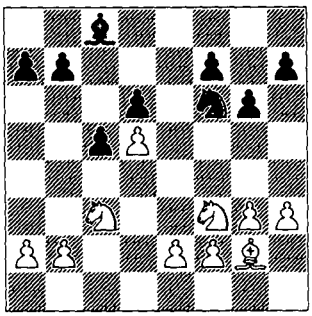
86



to gain the two bishops by playing ... ♘d3 exploiting the weakness of d3 caused by the fianchetto of the KB.

In view of the foregoing examples we can understand why White normally protects g4 with the prophylactic h3 before playing e4 *(87)*.

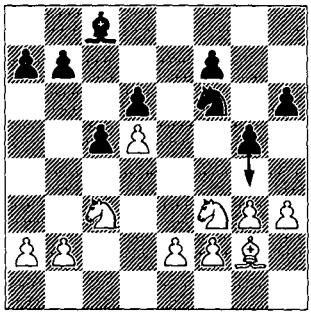
87



It is quite clear that the capacity of the black pieces to manoeuvre is considerably reduced.

In order to regain control of g4 and exploit the weakening of White's king's position caused by h3, Black sometimes undertakes a rather lively offensive on the kingside based on pushing the g-pawn with the support of the h-pawn *(88)*.

88



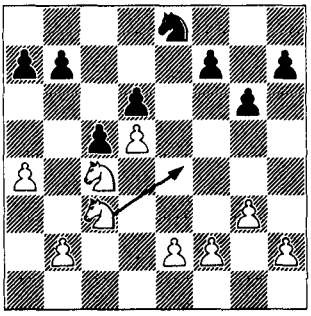
It goes without saying that such a plan is not always playable as it seriously weakens the king, but when Black is able to bring his forces to bear on the kingside this possibility must certainly not be underestimated.

The e4 square

Since, as we have seen, the e4 advance is often delayed or sometimes even dispensed with in the fianchetto variation, White can try to use the fact that e4 is free to increase the pressure on d6 by bringing the QN to e4 to augment the action of the KN on c4 *(89)*.

This idea can only be implemented when Black has both moved his KN and failed to challenge the ♘c4. It is difficult, of

89

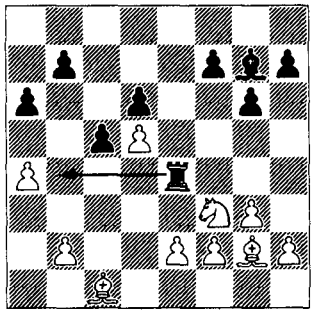


course, for these conditions to be fulfilled in the opening, but in the middlegame, or even the ending, it can happen that White can profit from the absence of the advance e4.

Black can also try to make use of the e4 square in order to exchange a pair of knights by playing ... ♖e8 in conjunction with ... ♘e4. This possibility arises most frequently in the early part of the game when the ♘f3 obstructs the KB's control of e4 *(90)*.

By exchanging knights Black increases the scope of his KB and in particular the pressure against b2. This can be enhanced by the intervention of the KR, especially when White has played a4 *(91)*.

91

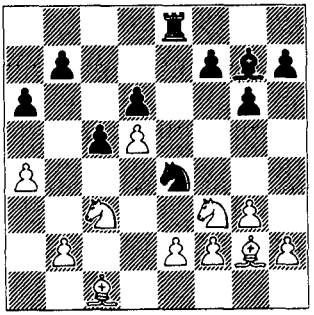


The rook finds a natural base on b4 where it hampers the development of White's queenside.

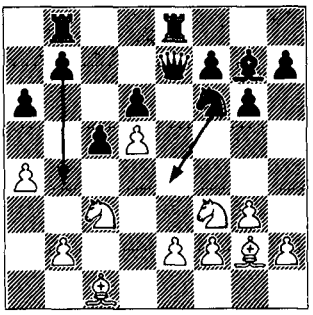
Pressure against e2

Black can also try to exploit the omission of e4 by creating pressure against the pawn on e2 by doubling heavy pieces on the e-file *(92)*.

90



92



To carry out his plan successfully Black must manage to remove the ♘c3 either by playing ... ♘e4 or achieving the thematic queenside expansion ... b5–b4.

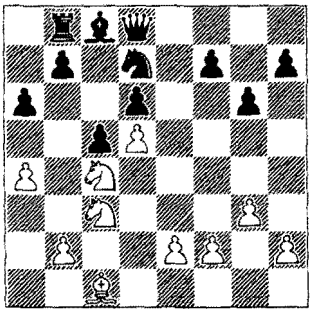
2 Tactical Ideas

In the absence of the e4 advance, and with the greater king safety afforded by the fianchetto, tactics are considerably reduced and the game assumes a mostly positional character. Similar tactical themes to those examined in the first chapter, however, can arise in the middle game if White plays e4 and f4.

The pseudo-sacrifice ♘xd6

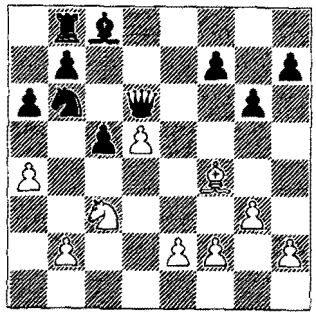
Since Black usually posts his QR on b8 and QN on d7, it often happens, as we have already observed, that the manoeuvre ♘f3–d2–c4 results in a direct attack on the d-pawn *(93)*.

93



In such situations Black must beware of playing automatically, since even thematic moves can sometimes meet with a simple refutation: ... ♘b6?, ♘xd6! ♕xd6, ♗f4 *(94)*.

94



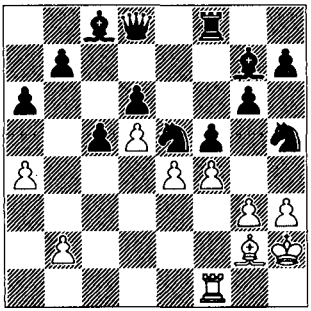
To neutralize this possibility it is sufficient for Black to have his KR on e8. If this were the case in diagram 94 then Black would be able to interpose the rook on e5 and although White could restore theoretical material parity the minor pieces are undoubtedly superior to the rook and pawn in the early part of the game.

Attacking the white king

In the variation where Black plays ... ♘e5 (see diagrams 83 and 84) White can try to profit from the position of this knight to advance his pawns with gain of tempo. However, such advances, in conjunction with the thematic h3, leave White's kingside very loose

and open to typical combinative possibilities *(95)*.

95

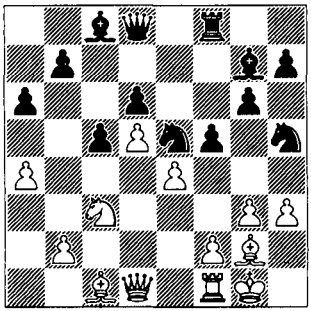


Black can answer f4 by leaving the knight *en prise*, taking advantage of the weakness of the b8–h2 diagonal aggravated by h3. If White accepts the sacrifice by fxe5 ♗xe5 then the pressure on g3 and the possible intervention of the queen (... ♕h4) can easily lead to an overwhelming attack.

In analogous situations Black can play ... f5 himself, before White has played f4, thereby offering the opponent a fork *(96)*.

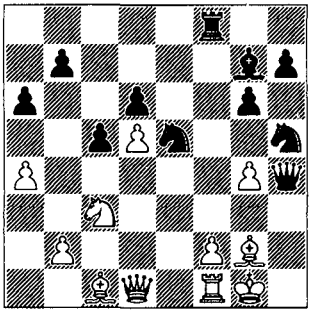
White plays exf5 and Black can-

96



not recapture with the pawn because of the ♘h5. After ... ♗xf5 instead, White can fork Black's pieces by g4 but there follows ... ♗xg4, hxg4 ♕h4 leaving the ♘h5 *en prise (97)*.

97



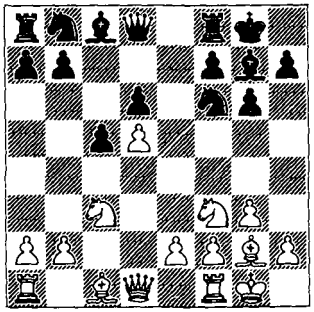
After gxh5 ♘g4 White has to give up his queen to avoid mate. Nor does it help White to decline the second piece by playing f3 because of ... ♘xg4, fxg4 ♗d4+.

3 Illustrative Games

Game 7
Liberzon–Yusupov
Lone Pine 1981
Fianchetto Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**e6**
4	**♘c3**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**g3**	**g6**
7	**♗g2**	**♗g7**
8	**♘f3**	**0-0**
9	**0-0** *(98)*	

98
B



This is the basic position of the Fianchetto Variation. In broad outline, White's plan is to transfer the KN to c4 and then prepare to mobilize his kingside pawns with a view to breaking through in the centre. He relies on the thematic moves a4 and ♘c4–a3 to contain Black's ambitions on the queenside and the prophylactic h3 to reduce the scope of the ♗c8 and ♘f6 on the kingside.

As usual, Black's counterplay stems from his queenside pawns and the dynamic possibilities offered by the e-file and the long diagonal h8–a1. Black has two basic methods of seeking to mobilize his queenside pawns according to how the QN is developed: the manoeuvre ... ♘a6–c7 followed by ... a6, or the simple ... ♘bd7 followed by ... a6 and ... ♖b8.

Other more experimental ideas are also worth mentioning:

(1) 9 ... ♕e7 (intending to counter the manoeuvre ♘f3–d2–c4 with the immediate ... ♘b8–d7–e5) 10 ♘d2 ♘bd7 11 ♘c4 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 13 a4 a6 14 ♗f4 ♕e7 15 ♕d2 ♖b8 16 ♗h6 ♗xh6 17 ♕xh6 b5 18 ♕d2 b4 and Black has succeeded in mobilizing his queenside pawns, but the exchange of his KB considerably reduces his dynamic possibilities.

(2) 9 ... ♖e8 (with the idea of playing ... ♘e4 if White does not play 10 ♘d2) 10 ♗f4 a6 (obliging a weakening of b4) 11 a4 ♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 13 ♘d2 ♖b4 14 ♘e4 h6 15 ♗d2 ♖xb2 16 ♕c1 ♖xd2 17 ♕xd2 and White stands better as Black is seriously behind in development and can only regain the exchange at the cost of endangering his king.

9 ... a6

With this move Black indirectly declares his plans for the QN. The alternative development is 9 ... ♘a6, e.g. 10 h3 ♗.d7 (or 10 ... ♘c7 11 e4 ♘d7 12 ♖e1 with mutual chances) 11 e4 ♕c8 12 ♔h2 ♖e8 13 ♖e1 c4 14 ♗f4 ♘c5 15 ♕c2 ♘d3 16 ♗.xd6 ♘xe1 17 ♖xe1 and White has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

10 a4 ♘bd7
11 ♘d2

Black can parry the direct attack on his d-pawn by ♗f4 (hoping to follow up with a quick

e4–e5) by protecting d6 with the queen and using g4 to establish a knight on e5. For example, 11 ♗f4 ♕e7 (or 11 ... ♕c7 12 e4 ♖e8 13 ♖e1 ♘g4 14 h3 ♘ge5 with balanced prospects) 12 ♖e1 (12 a5 is better with the idea of meeting 12 ... ♘g4 by 13 ♘a4) 12 ... ♖b8 13 e4 ♘g4 14 ♘d2 ♘de5 15 ♘f1 ♘c4 16 ♕e2 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 h3 ♘ge5 with equal chances. This example illustrates the possibilities Black has when White omits the prophylactic move h3.

11 ... ♖e8

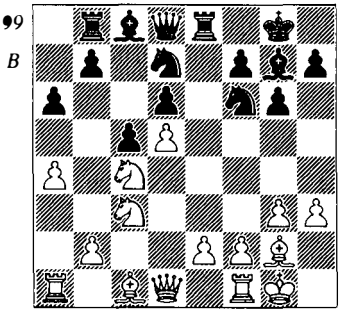
The alternative is 11 ... ♖b8 in order to leave e8 free for the KN, e.g. 12 ♘c4 ♘e8 (12 ... ♘b6? is bad because of 13 ♘xd6! ♕xd6 14 ♗f4) 13 a5 ♘e5 (on 13 ... b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 ♘a5 and White will exploit c6) 14 ♘b6 ♘c7 15 h3 ♘b5 16 ♗d2 ♖e8 with balanced prospects in a complicated position.

After the text move, the major continuation for a long time was 12 a5, intending to split Black's pawns after the subsequent ... b5 and *en passant* capture and then mobilize the white pawns. It used to be thought that this plan was favourable for White until it was discovered that Black can hold the balance by making the most of the open b-file, e.g. 12 a5 b5 13 axb6 ♘xb6 14 ♘b3 (with the idea of getting to c6 via a5) 14 ... ♘c4 15 ♖a4 ♘b6 16 ♖a2 ♘c4 17 ♕d3 ♖b8! 18 ♕xc4 ♖b4 19 ♕d3 ♖xb3.

12 h3

Much the most common continuation.

12 ... ♖b8
13 ♘c4 *(99)*



Now Black has the choice between two very different ways of protecting his d-pawn: 13 ... ♘b6 or 13 ... ♘e5. The former — which we shall see in the present game — commences long-term strategic operations on the queenside, whereas the latter generally presages violent turmoil on the kingside. After 13 ... ♘e5 the presence of the knight in the centre of the board challenges the white pawns to drive it away and this invariably produces a fierce tactical confrontation, e.g. 14 ♘a3 ♘h5 15 e4 (Black gains the upper hand after 15 ♔h2 g5! 16 e4?! g4!) 15

... ♖f8 (15 ... f5!? creates massive complications, e.g. 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 g4 ♗xg4 18 hxg4 ♕h4 19 gxh5 ♖f8 — preventing ♗f4 in reply to ... ♘g4 — 20 h6 ♗h8 21 ♘e4 ♘g4 22 ♕xg4 ♕xg4 with a totally unclear position) 16 ♔h2 f5 17 f4 b5 18 axb5 (Black gets a ferocious attack after 18 fxe5?! ♘xg3! 19 ♔xg3 ♗xe5+) 18 ... axb5 19 ♘axb5 fxe4 20 ♗xe4 with a complex position which theory considers to be in White's favour.

13 ... ♘b6

This move protects the d-pawn, challenges the ♘c4, and prepares to complete development by ... ♗d7.

14 ♘a3

14 ♘xd6? does not work here because of 14 ... ♕xd6 15 ♗f4 ♖e5. The move played is only a temporary retreat as White intends to chase away the ♘b6 by a5 and then return to c4.

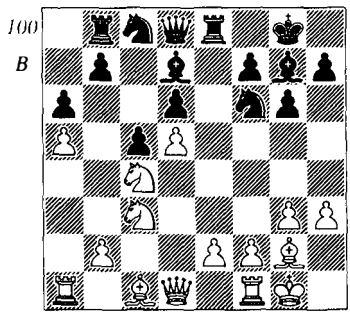
14 ... ♗d7

Completing development and freeing c8 for the ♘b6. This move also contains a tactical threat: 15 ... ♘xa4 16 ♘xa4 b5 regaining the piece with a good game. It is not possible to implement this idea immediately because of the unprotected position of the ♖b8: 14 ... ♘xa4? 15 ♕xa4 b5 16 ♕b3 b4 17 ♘c4 and White saves the knights.

15 a5

In a way, this move facilitates the unravelling of Black's queenside. 15 e4 sets greater problems for the defence, e.g. 15 ... ♘c8 16 ♕d3 ♕c7 (16 ... b5!? 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♘axb5 ♗xb5 19 ♘xb5 ♘d7 20 ♘c3 ♘e5 probably gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn) 17 ♗e3 ♘a7 18 ♖fc1 b5 19 b4 c4 20 ♕f1 bxa4! (otherwise White stands better after 21 a5) 21 ♘xc4 ♖xb4 with chances for both sides.

15 ... ♘c8
16 ♘c4 *(100)*



White has secured his ♘c4 against the ... b5 advance at the cost of relinquishing control of b5. Black is well placed to exploit this factor, first with the bishop in order to eliminate the irritating ♘c4 (... ♗b5xc4), and then to

bring the ♘c8 back into play (... ♘a7–b5).

16 ... ♗b5
17 ♕b3 ♗xc4
18 ♕xc4 ♘d7

Black would be left with a weak a-pawn after 18 .. b5?! 19 axb6 ♘xb6 20 ♕h4 and White would also obtain play on the kingside.

19 ♕d3?!

In view of... ♘e5 White decides to retreat the queen to c2, but this not only cedes control of b5, it also costs an important tempo which should have been used to mobilize his pawn centre. After 19 e4 White would be able to meet 19 ... ♘e5 by 20 ♕e2, and f4 would be in the air.

19 ... ♘e5
20 ♕c2 ♘a7!

Black exploits the opponent's inaccuracy and introduces the positional threat ... ♘b5–d4. It would have been counter-productive to go hunting the a-pawn by 20 ... ♘c4? as after 21 ♘e4 ♘xa5 22 ♗g5 White would obtain awkward threats.

21 ♖d1

White has run out of useful moves as he no longer dares to permanently weaken d4 by playing e4.

21 ... ♘b5
22 ♘xb5

Not wishing to submit himself to the humble advance e3, White accepts the positional inferiority following the exchange of knights hoping to be able to contain the phalanx of black pawns.

22 ... axb5
23 ♕b3 ♕d7

23 ... b4 was more direct but Black wants to retain the possibility of playing ... ♘c4 and pressurizing the pawns on a5 and b2.

24 ♗f1

Threatening e4.

24 ... ♘c4
25 e3

Now this move is practically forced, since White must be able to capture on c4 if he is to develop his pieces.

25 ... ♖a8
26 ♔g2

The immediate 26 ♗xc4 bxc4 27 ♕xc4 ♕xh3 would clearly be advantageous to Black.

26 ... ♖a7!

Beginning a very subtle plan aimed at exchanging the b5 pawn for that on a5 so as to open the a-file in such a way as to be

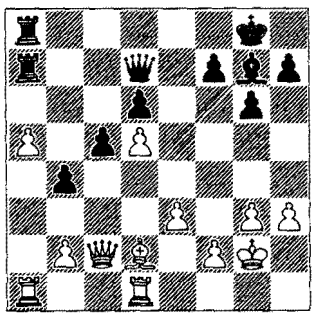
able to use it to penetrate the opponent's territory. The simplistic 26 ... ♘xa5 27 ♕xb5 ♕xb5 28 ♗xb5 ♘b3 would have run up against the clever reply 29 ♖a3! obliging Black to exchange rooks and close the a-file, and in the absence of lines of penetration the game would probably end in a draw. After the text move, however, things develop very differently.

27	**♗xc4**	**bxc4**
28	**♕xc4**	**♖ea8**
29	**♗d2**	

Hoping for 29 ... ♗xb2? 30 ♖ab1 and White stands better.

29	**...**	**b5!**
30	**♕c2**	**b4** *(101)*

101
W



Black's last two moves constitute the point of the manoeuvre begun by 26 ... ♖a7! After the a-pawn falls White can no longer prevent the opponent's heavy pieces from penetrating his position. In addition, the advance of Black's pawns has produced an obvious difference in the value of the bishops.

31	**e4**	**♖xa5**
32	**♖xa5**	**♖xa5**
33	**♗f4**	

Seeking to keep the black queen tied down to the defence of the d-pawn.

33	**...**	**♕e7**

After 33 ... ♖a2 White would have been able to muddy matters by playing 34 e5!? dxe5 35 ♗e3.

34	**b3**	

Sooner or later this advance is forced in order to prevent the further advance of Black's pawns. Now Black has absolute control of the a-file thanks to the KB.

34	**...**	**♗d4**
35	**♖e1**	**f6**
36	**♖e2**	**♖a1**
37	**h4**	**♔g7**
38	**♗e3**	**♗c3**
39	**♗d2**	**♗e5**
40	**f4?**	

In a difficult position and in bad time-trouble, White fatally weakens his second rank and the a7–g1 diagonal, which Black exploits in impeccable fashion.

40	**...**	**♗d4**
41	**♗e3**	**♗xe3**
42	**♖xe3**	**♕a7!**
43	**♖e2**	**c4**

The opening of the diagonal seals White's fate.

44	**♕xc4**	**♕g1+**
45	**♔h3**	**♖c1!**
46	**♕xb4**	

Or 46 ♕b5 ♕f1+ and wins.

46	**...**	**♕f1+**
47	**♖g2**	**♖c2**

0-1

Game 8
Kasparov–Korchnoi
London 1983
Accelerated Fianchetto Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**e6**
3	**g3**	

This order of moves permits Black to transpose to a Benoni where White has played g3 in place of the standard ♘c3.

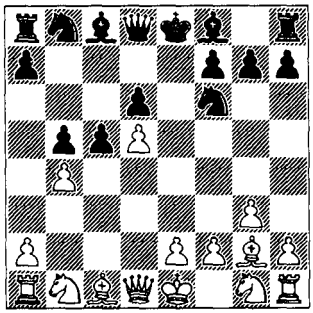
3	**...**	**c5**
4	**d5**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**b5**

This immediate expansion is made possible by the absence of the ♘c3.

6	**♗g2**	**d6**
7	**b4!** *(102)*	

Here and on the previous move White has explored other paths (e4 and a4), but the line chosen is the most logical from the strategic point of view.

102
B



The objective of this advance, as we have already seen, is to put pressure on c5 so as to force Black to clarify the situation either by advancing or capturing, both of which give White access to d4. This strategy is particularly effective with the KB fianchettoed as it supports the further invasion of c6 following ♘d4.

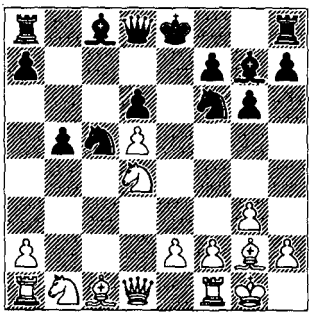
7	**...**	**♘a6!?**

Of course Black will not play ... c4, either now or later, as this would simply make White a gift of d4. Acceptance of the pawn by 7 ... cxb4 would allow White to open lines against Black's queenside pawns by 8 a3 bxa3 9 ♘xa3, after which it would be difficult for Black to hang on to the pawn, as protection by ... a6 is impossible.

ible. At the time of writing, however, this gambit has not been played sufficiently to be able to make a definitive evaluation.

With the text move Korchnoi obliges his opponent to capture on c5 hoping that the c5 square thus obtained for his knight will balance White's on d4.

8	**bxc5**	**♘xc5**
9	**♘f3**	**g6**
10	**0-0**	**♗g7**
11	**♘d4** *(103)*	



The effects of the plan initiated by White with the thrust b4 now become clear: the disappearance of the c5 pawn enables White to occupy d4 and thus the weakness of c6 can easily be exploited. Normally — that is to say when White plays 3 ♘c3 in place of 3 g3 — the advance b4 does not happen as quickly as in this game and thus White usually does not experience any great problems along the a1–h8 diagonal. In the diagrammed position, by contrast, White has still to develop any queenside pieces and the ♖a1 is dangerously exposed.

11 ... 0-0?!

A natural but slow move which gives White time to develop his queenside. Black would have done better to attack the pawn on d5 immediately by 11 ... ♗b7, e.g. 12 ♘xb5 ♘fe4 13 ♘d4 ♗xd5 with a position where the static weakness on d6 is offset by the dynamism of the black pieces.

12 ♘c3

White sensibly gets on with his development and refuses the offered pawn on d5 the acceptance of which would have given Black an enormous lead in development after 12 ♘xb5 ♘fe4.

12 ... a6?

But this is really too passive and allows White to have things all his own way. It was essential to play 12 ... b4 in order to increase the action of the ♗g7 along the long diagonal and to seek corresponding compensation for c6 in the square c3, e.g. 13 ♘c6 ♕d7 14 ♘b5 ♘fe4 15 ♘bd4 ♘c3 with balanced chances.

13 ♘c6!

The plan of occupying c6, initiated by the advance b4, has been completed. This advanced outpost cramps Black's queenside and allows White to begin operations there with the advance a4.

13 ... ♕c7
14 ♗e3

Preparing to neutralize the ♗g7 completely by a subsequent ♗d4.

14 ... ♗b7

White's ♘c6 almost totally paralyses Black's ability to undertake anything worthwhile since it controls almost all of Black's key squares for counterplay in the Modern Benoni: b4, d4, e5, and b8. Thus, with the text move Korchnoi sensibly decides to give himself the option of eliminating this powerful intruder at the right moment.

15 ♗d4 ♖fe8

Black's sole remaining active move. 15 ... ♘fd7 would be met by 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 a4 with a clear advantage.

16 a4

Having placed his pieces on their ideal squares, Kasparov commences operations on the queen's wing.

16 ... bxa4

An unpleasant decision, but practically forced, as shown by the alternatives. If 16 ... ♗xc6?! 17 dxc6 b4 18 ♗xf6! bxc3 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♕d4+ ♔g8 21 ♖a2! and the pawn on c3 cannot be saved; on the other hand if 16 ... ♘xa4 17 ♘xa4 bxa4 18 ♖xa4 with a clear advantage since 18 ... ♘xd5? 19 ♗xd5 ♗xc6 20 ♖c4 loses.

17 ♗xc5

17 ♘xa4?! would not be good since Black's position after 17 ... ♘xd5! 18 ♗xg7 ♕xc6 would be much more defensible than appears at first sight. With the text move White pursues his queenside ambitions with extreme single-mindedness even to the extent of exchanging his magnificent dark-squared bishop. The idea is to recapture on a4 with the queen in order to reinforce the ♘c6 — which otherwise is constantly vulnerable to the tactical blow ... ♘xd5 should the QN ever move — and afterwards to attack Black's weak c-pawn.

17 ... dxc5
18 ♕xa4

Once again, on 18 ♘xa4? ♘xd5! 19 ♕xd5 ♗xa1 20 ♖xa1 ♖ac8 and Black wins material. On the

other hand, if 18 ♖xa4 Black can drive away the ♘c6, e.g. 18 ... ♘d7 19 ♖a3 ♘e5 20 ♘a5 ♖ad8! and Black has also activated all his pieces.

The text move connects the rooks which are ready to occupy the b- and c-files.

18 ... ♘d7
19 ♕b3?

An inaccuracy which risks forfeiting all of White's advantage. At first sight it seems that the tactical threats based on the advance d6 are crushing, but Black does have a way out which White has overlooked. The correct move was 19 ♕a3!, keeping the black knight tied down to the defence of the c-pawn, after which 19 ... c4? would lose because of 20 d6.

19 ... ♗xc6!

Black seizes the opportunity to get rid of the embarrassing ♘c6. Other possibilities would have been inferior, e.g. 19 ... ♘e5? 20 d6 and wins or 19 ... ♗xc3 20 ♕xc3 ♖xe2 21 ♖ab1! (threatening d6) 21 ... ♗xc6 22 dxc6 and after the fall of the c-pawn White has a winning position.

20 dxc6

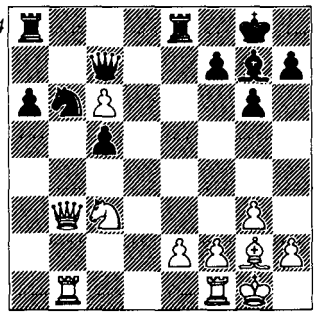
The passed pawn on c6 embodies the logical consequence of White's strategy directed at exploiting that square's weakness. Nevertheless, even at this late moment, if Black had found the right way it would have been difficult for the passed pawn by itself to guarantee victory.

20 ... ♘b6

Not 20 ... ♘e5? as Black must control the d5 square.

21 ♖ab1
(104)

104
B



The critical point. Now the correct line is 21 ... c4! 22 ♕a3 (22 ♕xb6 ♕xb6 23 ♖xb6 ♗xc3 gives a drawn ending) 22 ... ♕e5! with the idea of bringing the K B to the aid of the queenside, e.g. 23 ♖fc1 ♗f8! followed by ... ♗c5 and even if White retains a certain structural advantage, Black's position has become much more dynamic and aggressive.

21 ... ♖ab8?!

This natural but inexact move

enables White to correct the error of his 19th move and regain the initiative.

22 ♕a3!

The attack against Black's queenside pawns is as effective as it is simple.

22 ... c4

22 ... ♗d4 23 e3 ♘c4 24 ♘d5! ♘xa3 25 ♘xc7 ♘xb1 26 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 (or 26 ... ♘d2 27 ♘d6! and wins) 27 exd4 ♘c3 28 d5 would give White a won ending.

23 ♖fc1 ♗xc3

Black seizes the chance to win White's e-pawn.

24 ♕xc3

Black would have obtained real chances of counterplay after 24 ♖xc3 ♖xe2 25 ♕xa6 ♕e5!

24 ... ♖xe2
25 ♕d4!

Centralizing the queen and tying Black's pieces to the protection of the ♘b6.

25 ... a5?

The final mistake which allows White to increase the pressure on the b-file decisively. It was essential to play 25 ... ♖e5 26 ♖e1 ♖b5 27 ♖bd1 and although Black is clearly in dire straits he can still resist.

26 ♖b5

Preparing to double on the b-file with gain of tempo.

26 ... a4
27 ♗f3

Played in order to free g2 for the king as will become clear in the following variation.

27 ... ♖ee8

Or 27 ... ♖e6 28 ♖cb1 a3 29 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 30 ♕xb6 a2 31 ♕b8+! ♕xb8 (if 31 ... ♔g7 32 ♕b2+ etc.) 32 ♖xb8+ ♔g7 33 ♖a8 ♖e1+ 34 ♔g2 (the crucial difference: if the bishop was on g2 Black would win) 34 ... a1(Q) 35 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 36 c7 and wins.

28 ♕c5

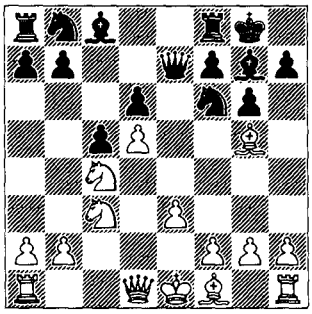
Preventing ... a3 and threatening ♖cb1. Black can resist no longer.

28 ... ♕e7
29 c7 ♕xc5
30 ♖xc5 ♖bc8
31 ♗b7 ♘d7
32 ♖5xc4
1–0

3 The Restricted Centre

Main Line: Knight Tour Variation
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 ♗g5 ♕e7 10 e3 *(105)*.

105
B



White can also employ a restricted centre in other situations. For example, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘f3 g6 and now:

Knight Tour Variation
7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 ♗f4 (or 9 ♗g5 h6 10 ♗f4 ♘e8 11 ♕c1) 9 ... ♘e8 (or 9 ... b6) 10 ♕d2 b6 11 e3

Uhlmann System
7 ♗g5 ♗g7 8 e3

The same type of centre can also arise in the Queen Check Variation (7 ♗f4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+).

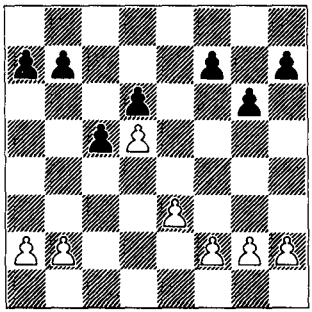
1 Strategic Ideas

Since the advance e4 somewhat weakens the d4 square and also gives Black a target on the e-file, White may choose an alternative strategy of first developing his pieces (in particular the QB) before deciding whether to play e3 or e4. If White plays e4 then we obtain the type of structure examined in the first chapter and so we will concentrate here on the strategic implications of the Restricted Centre with e3.

After this advance the pawn structure is as follows *(106)*.

As noted previously, White's main intention is to keep control of d4 and try not to expose the e-pawn to attack. But in the fol-

106

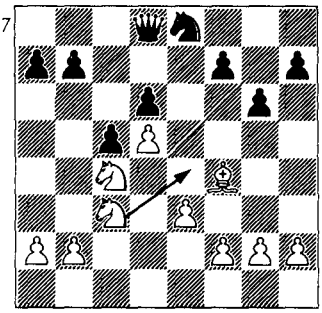


lowing examination of the pawn structure other considerations will also become apparent.

The e4 square

As in the Fianchetto Variation, the fact that the e4 square is free can be useful to both players. White can make use of it by the QN to increase pressure on d6 *(107)*.

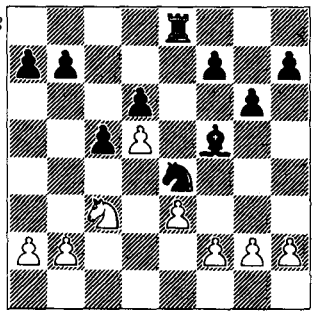
107



As we already remarked in the preceding chapter, it is rare for this kind of situation to occur in the opening, but the possibility must not be underestimated in the middlegame or even the ending.

Black can use the e4 square to pursue simplification by ... ♘e4 *(108)*.

108



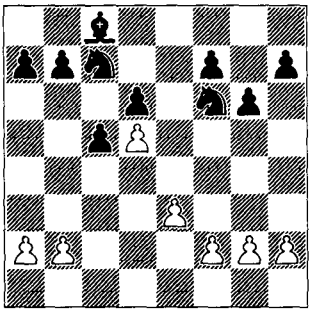
As in the analogous variations where White has fianchettoed the KB, here too Black's manoeuvre will generally be prepared by moves such as ... ♖e8 and/or ... ♗f5.

The vulnerability of d5

The lack of a pawn on e4 or a bishop on g2 in the Restricted Centre increases the vulnerability of the pawn on d5. Consequently, in these positions Black quite often tries to put pressure on d5 by manoeuvres such as ... ♘b8–a6–c7 *(109)*.

The pressure on d5 can be increased by the placing of the QB on b7 after either ... b6 or ... b5. Sometimes Black's QN will go to b4 via a6 with the same intention.

109

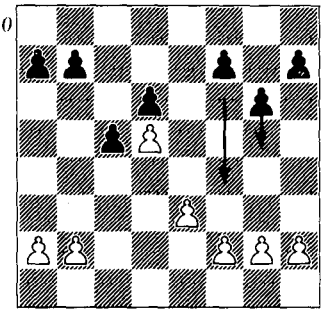


As we will see later on, the absence of a pawn on e4 may also suggest to Black the idea of sacrificing his d-pawn thereby opening the file and enabling the heavy pieces to join in the attack on d5.

The mobility of Black's kingside pawns

Another appreciable difference between the Classical and Restricted Centres is White's complete lack of control of f5 in the latter, a factor which enhances the mobility of Black's kingside pawns *(110)*.

110

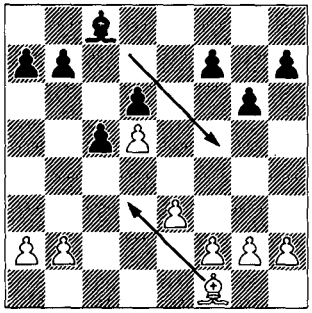


Obviously, the advance of the kingside pawns is a double-edged weapon and favourable conditions are generally necessary for its implementation.

The b1–h7 diagonal

A further strategic element which is apparent from a consideration of the pawn structure of the restricted centre is that the b1–h7 diagonal is relatively free. Either player may take possession of the diagonal with their bishop *(111)*.

111



As we will see later on, White is particularly interested in controlling the diagonal when Black has weakened his kingside pawns by ... h6 and ... g5.

The development of White's QB

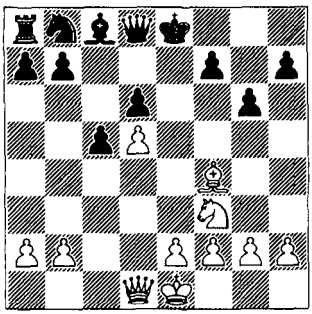
Given that White may play e3, he needs to develop the QB and it will go to either f4 or g5 as can be

seen from the variations listed at the beginning of this chapter. The position takes on different strategic characteristics according to whether or not the bishop's development is preceded by the manoeuvre ♘f3–d2–c4.

The immediate ♗f4

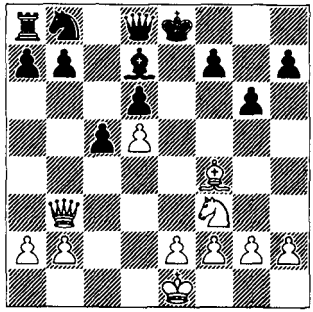
Clearly, this development is logically connected with a plan of creating pressure against Black's d-pawn. However, we have already seen (cf. diagram 5) that when White first plays ♗f4 and then follows up with ♘f3–d2 Black can neutralize the intended attack on d6 by playing ... ♘h5 before White has time to complete his knight manoeuvre. Thus when White plays an immediate ♗f4 he generally tries to increase the pressure on d6 by means of a queen manoeuvre *(112)*.

112



White plays ♕a4+ essentially forcing Black to reply with ... ♗d7. The queen then retreats to b3 leaving Black's pawns on d6 and b7 simultaneously under attack *(113)*.

113



White wants to force ... ♕c7, which will cause Black some problems in the development of his queenside since the obstruction of d7 and c7 makes things awkward for the QN. In addition, if Black's queen goes to the h2–b8 diagonal White will try to exploit the opposition of queen and bishop with a quick e4–e5 breakthrough. Generally, in such lines where e4 is played the game broadly takes on the strategic outlines of the Classical centre.

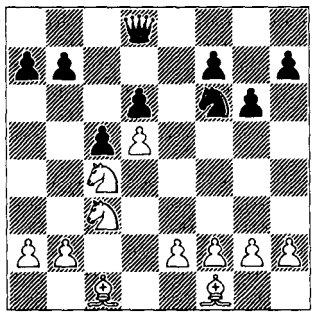
Things develop very differently if Black decides to sacrifice his d-pawn. This he can do in the above diagrammed position by immediately advancing his queenside pawns by ... b5 intending, after ♗xd6, to gain precious time driving off the enemy pieces by ...

♕b6 and ... c4. In such lines White will normally opt for a Restricted Centre since the advance e4 is risky in view of Black's development advantage.

The delayed ♗f4

If White wants to link the development of the QB to f4 with an attack on d6 by the manoeuvre ♘f3–d2–c4, then he must transfer the knight first in order to avoid the defence ... ♘h5 in reply to ♗f4 *(114)*.

114

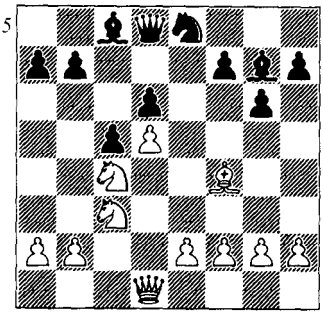


It would be mistaken for Black to stop the threatened ♗f4 by playing... ♘h5 since White would then instantly switch plans and play e4 followed by ♗e2 and Black would have to lose time retreating the knight. It is clear, therefore, that Black cannot avoid the impending attack on his d-pawn and can only choose whether to defend or sacrifice it.

Protecting the d-pawn

The only way of protecting the d-pawn is by playing ... ♘e8 *(115)*.

115



We can make some general observations about this type of position:

(1) Increasing the pressure on d6 by ♘e4 or ♘b5 fails for tactical reasons (see below, 'Queenside traps').

(2) Black is ready to profit from the absence of a pawn on e4 and chase the bishop by ... g5 and ... f5.

(3) To prevent this threat, and to increase the possibility of ♘e4 or ♘b5, White plays ♕d2.

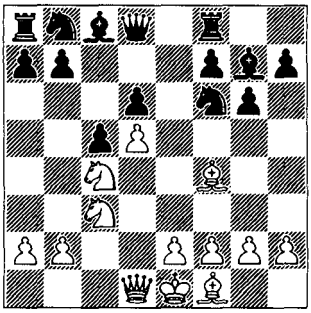
(4) To reduce the pressure on d6 Black generally has recourse to the manoeuvre ... b6 and ... ♗a6xc4.

Sacrificing the d-pawn

Instead of defending his d-pawn Black may choose to sacrifice it,

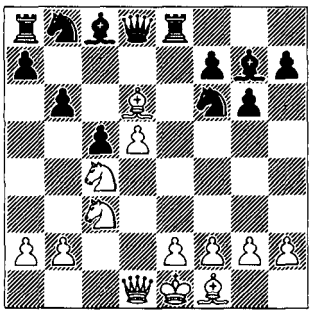
obtaining the initiative as a consequence of the time lost by White in accepting *(116)*.

116



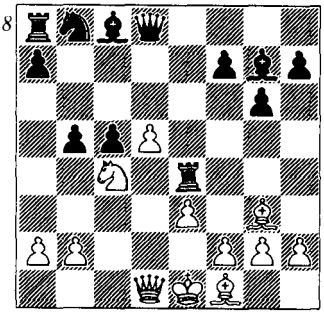
Black can ignore the attack on his d-pawn by playing, for example, ... b6 intending to continue with ... ♗a6. White cannot capture on d6 with the knight because after ♘xd6 ♘h5, ♘xc8 ♘xf4, the ♘c8 would be trapped. Thus White is obliged to capture on d6 with the bishop, but after ♗xd6 ♖e8 *(117)*

117



the threat of ... ♗a6 forces White to retreat his bishop if he wants to avoid having to exchange it for Black's undeveloped QN. After ♗g3 Black continues with ... ♘e4 and White can hardly avoid exchanging knights. The arrival of the rook on e4 forces White to play e3 in view of the double threat ... ♖xc4 and ... ♖d4 and at this point Black confirms his initiative with ... b5 *(118)*.

118



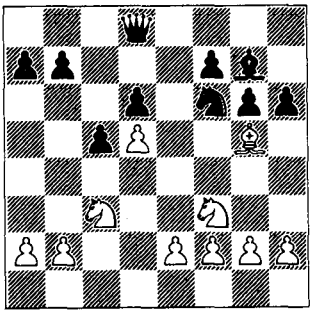
White is a pawn up, but his lack of development and the pressure against the pawns on b2 and d5 make it anything but easy for him to keep his material advantage.

The immediate ♗g5

The basic idea behind the immediate ♗g5 is to encourage Black to weaken his kingside by ... h6 and ... g5 in order to get out of the annoying pin. Sooner or later, Black normally decides to play ... h6 *(119)*.

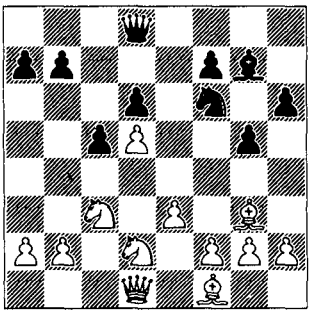
After White retreats the bishop to h4, Black is obliged to follow up with ... g5 in order to free

119



himself from the pin. White then retreats anew to g3 reinstating the thematic pressure on d6 which can be augmented by ♘f3–d2–c4 and secured by e3 *(120)*.

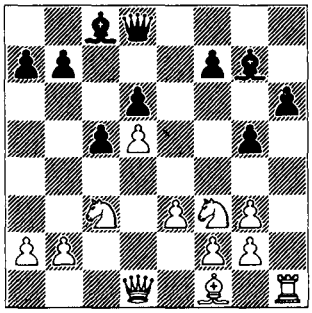
120



The point of the move e3 is to control the square h5 and prevent Black eliminating the ♗g3 by means of ... ♘f6–h5. The above diagram shows the ideal effects from White's point of view of his pinning manoeuvre: Black has weakened his king's position without succeeding in eliminating the enemy QB whereas White is ready to increase the pressure on d6 by ♘c4 and take control of the b1–h7 diagonal by ♗d3.

However, if Black frees himself from the pin at the right moment White cannot obtain such a position, as he cannot avoid the simplifying manoeuvre ... ♘f6–h5xg3 *(121)*.

121



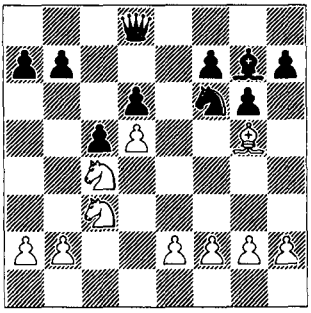
In this kind of position White exerts a certain amount of pressure along the h-file, but the major strategic theme centres around the battle for control of the white squares, particularly f5.

The delayed ♗g5

White has attempted to improve his pin's effect by carrying out the ♘f3–d2–c4 manoeuvre before playing ♗g5 *(122)*.

Now Black can no longer get out of the pin and exchange the QB by ... h6, ... g5 and ... ♘h5 because after the bishop retreats to g3 it attacks d6. Consequently,

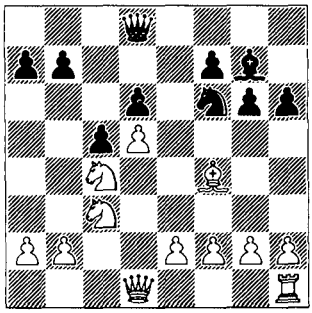
122



in place of ... ♘h5 Black would be obliged to defend by ... ♘e8.

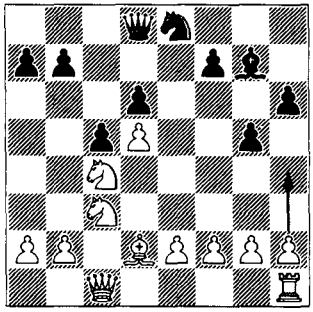
In addition, after the advance ... h6 White has the option of retreating to f4 obtaining an identical position to that reached in the postponed ♗f4 variation except for the presence of Black's h-pawn on h6 *(123)*.

123



Here, too, Black has the choice between defending or sacrificing his d-pawn. If he opts for defence by ... ♘e8 then White can use the pawn on h6 to introduce a new attacking idea: he plays ♕c1 and retreats the bishop to d2 after ... g5 *(124)*.

124



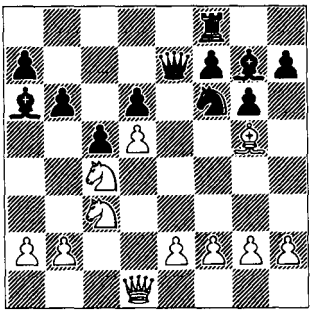
To exploit the weakening of the kingside thus induced it is logical here for White to open up lines by playing h4.

Challenging the ♘c4

Black can avoid all these complications in the line where White delays the development of the QB to g5 by challenging the ♘c4 instead of compromising his kingside by ... h6 and ... g5. One method is to enlist the help of the ♗c8: in a position of the type illustrated in diagram 122 Black plays ... ♕e7, ... b6, and ... ♗a6 *(125)*.

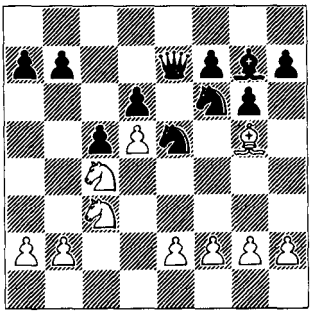
The move ... ♕e7 aims to prevent ♘e4 and allows Black to defend d6 by ... ♖d8 if White manages to increase the pressure on d6 by manoeuvres such as ♕d2–f4. Alternatively, Black can challenge the ♘c4 by calling up

125



the ♘b8: Black plays ... ♕e7 followed by ... ♘d7–e5 *(126)*.

126



Here the move ... ♕e7 is indispensable as it not only prepares the knight's path by protecting d6 but also enables Black to recapture on e5 with the queen should White exchange knights.

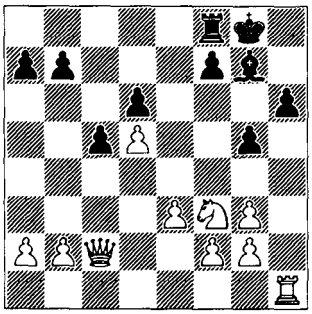
2 Tactical Ideas

White has two basic plans available in the restricted centre: to pin the KN by ♗g5, trying thereby to induce the opponent to weaken his kingside, or to pressurize the d6 pawn by ♗f4. Normally, the recurring tactical ideas in these lines are based either on the subsequent exploitation of the weakness of Black's king's position or on the indirect defence of the d-pawn.

Attacking the black king

When Black gets himself out of the pin and exchanges White's QB by playing ... h6, ... g5, and ... ♘h5xg3, a dangerous situation can arise *(127)*.

127



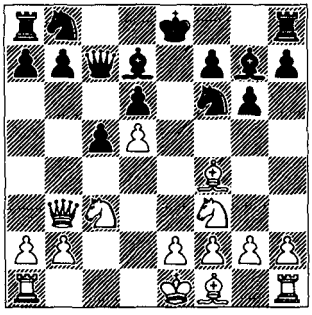
White profits from the threat of mate on h7 by playing ♘xg5. This theme can also occur when White has his KB on the b1–h7 diagonal instead of the queen, in which case, in favourable circumstances, after ♘xg5 hxg5, ♗h7+ ♔h8, the ♗h7 will be able to deliver a dangerous discovered check.

Queenside traps

When White plays the immediate ♗f4 in conjunction with the

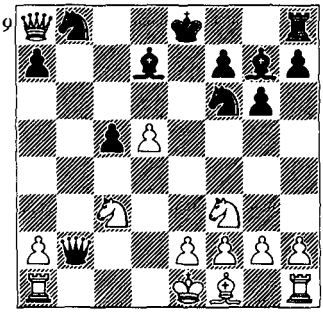
manoeuvre ♕a4+–b3 in order to attack both b7 and d6, the following position can arise *(128)*.

128



White cannot force matters by ♗xd6 ♕xd6, ♕xb7 because after ... ♕b6, ♕xa8 ♕xb2 *(129)* ...

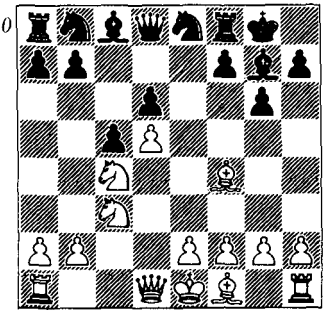
129



... Black obtains a winning position, e.g. ♘d1 ♕b4+, ♘d2 ♘e4.

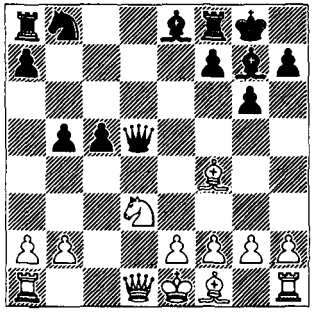
In similar situations, as we have already seen, Black may decide to sacrifice his d-pawn, and sometimes, in fact, this sacrifice actually becomes a trap. For example, the following position can arise in the variation where White delays the development of the QB to f4 and Black protects his d-pawn by ... ♘e8 *(130)*.

130



White dare not try to win the d-pawn by playing ♘e4 because after ... b5, ♘cxd6 ♘xd6, ♗xd6 ♖e8 Black obtains a winning position. Neither does ♘b5 work as after ... ♗d7, ♘bxd6 b5, ♘xe8 ♗xe8, ♘e5 ♕d6, ♘d3 ♕xd5 *(131)* ...

131



... Black obtains a clear advantage.

3 Illustrative Games

Game 9
Grigorian–Kasparov
Baku 1980
Uhlmann System

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**e6**
4	**♘c3**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**♘f3**	**g6**
7	**♗g5**	

By developing his pieces before committing his pawns White keeps Black guessing about his intentions concerning the central formation. As we already know, White's basic idea with the text move is to encourage Black to loosen his kingside by ... h6 and ... g5. Alternatively, White may opt for 7 ♗f4 hoping to disorganize Black's set-up by means of the following queen manoeuvre: 7 ... ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕b3 and now the most modern line — in place of 9 ... ♕c7 10 e4 for which see the note to Black's 7th move in Game 2 — is 9 ... b5!?, e.g. 10 ♗xd6 (after 10 ♘xb5 ♗xb5! 11 ♕xb5+ ♘bd7 12 ♗xd6 ♘e4 13 ♗e5 0-0 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 Black has tremendous compensation for the sacrificed material) 10 ... ♕b6 11 ♗e5 0-0 12 e3 c4 13 ♕d1 ♘a6 14 a3 ♘c5 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

For 7 ♘d2 see Game 10.

7 ... ♗g7

Black can also try the immediate 7 ... h6, but in this case he must be careful since after 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♗g3 ♘h5 10 ♕a4+ the ripost 10 ... ♗d7, for example, must take the following interesting sacrifice into account: 11 ♕e4+ ♕e7 12 ♗xd6 ♕xe4 13 ♘xe4 f5 14 ♗xf8 fxe4 15 ♗xc5 exf3 16 gxf3 with compensation for the piece.

8 e3

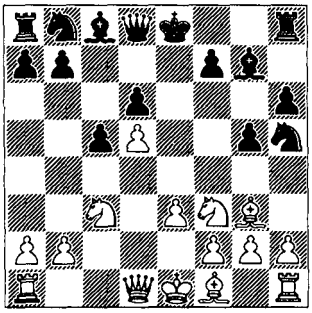
For 8 e4 see the note to White's 8th move in Game 1.

8 ... h6

Black reacts at the right moment not only to get out of the pin but also to make sure of getting rid of the enemy QB. Delaying ... h6 would allow White to retain the bishop, e.g. 8 ... 0-0 9 ♘d2 and White's control of h5 prevents Black playing ... ♘h5 as in the game.

9	**♗h4**	**g5**
10	**♗g3**	**♘h5** *(132)*

If White had played 8 e4 then he would now have the possibility of playing the sharp 11 ♗b5+ ♔f8 12 e5!? which we have already indicated in White's 8th move in Game 1. In the diag-


132
W

rammed position, on the other hand, White has no sharp continuation available after 11 ♗b5+ ♔f8, and by itself the fact that Black has lost the right to castle has no great importance especially as after ... ♘xg3, hxg3 the ♖h8 is quite usefully placed.

11 ♘d2

It is worth noting that in the variations where White forgoes e4 the manoeuvre ♘f3–d2–c4 contains the additional threat of a rapid strike at d6 by ♘e4. In place of the text move White can also try to exploit Black's kingside weaknesses by means of the simple developing move 11 ♗d3. The control of the b1–h7 diagonal in conjunction with the coming opening of the h-file can easily spell tactical danger for Black. Two rather specific examples: 11 ♗d3 ♘xg3 12 hxg3 ♘d7 13 ♕c2 and now:

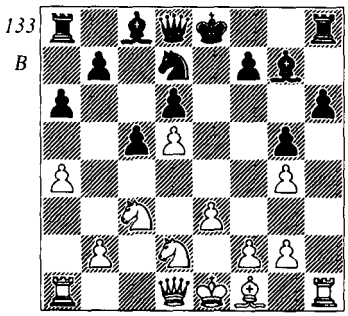
(1) 13 ... ♕e7 14 ♘d2 ♘e5 15 ♗f5 ♗xf5 16 ♕xf5 c4 17 ♔e2 0-0? 18 ♘ce4 b5? 19 ♖xh6! with a winning attack.

(2) 13 ... a6 14 a4 ♕e7 15 ♗f5 ♘e5 16 a5 ♗xf5 17 ♕xf5 ♕d7 18 ♕c2 0-0? 19 ♘xg5! etc.

11 ... ♘xg3
12 hxg3 a6
13 g4

Hoping to control the white squares on the kingside. Nevertheless, 13 ♗d3 would have been a better means to the same end.

13 ... ♘d7
14 a4? *(133)*


133
B

An illogical follow-up to the previous move which allows Black to turn the g-pawn into a target and thereby assume the initiative. White ought to have continued his plan by 14 ♗d3, as the critical continuation 14 ... ♘e5 15 ♗f5 ♗xf5 16 gxf5 ♘d3+ 17 ♔e2 is

not good for Black since on 17 ... ♘xb2 comes 18 ♕b3.

14 ... ♘e5
15 ♗e2

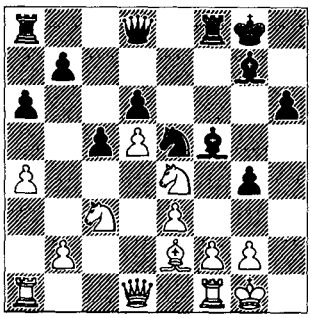
White cannot bring himself to play f3 but the move played condemns his queen and KB to the protection of the g-pawn.

15 ... 0-0
16 0-0 f5

Simple and good; the text move considerably increases the activity of Black's pieces.

17 gxf5 ♗xf5
18 ♘de4 g4! *(134)*

134
W



Black emerges victorious from the opening phase. White's plan to control the light squares on the kingside has completely backfired and the black pieces are poised to initiate a violent attack against the enemy king. The opening of the d8–h4 diagonal by the text move enables the queen to join in the attack at the right moment.

19 ♘g3 h5!?

Kasparov dreams up a fantastic variation based on the sacrifice of his h-pawn in order to penetrate with his major pieces down the h-file. If now 20 ♘xh5 there follows 20 ... ♕h4 21 ♘f4 ♖f6 22 g3 ♕h7 23 ♔g2 ♗c2! 24 ♖h1 (if 24 ♕d2 ♖h6 25 ♖h1 ♗e4+ and wins) 24 ... ♗xd1 25 ♖xh7 ♗xe2 26 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 27 ♘cxe2 ♖h8 with a winning position.

20 ♘xf5

Otherwise Black plays ... ♗g6 after which the ♘g3 becomes a target for the further advance of the h-pawn.

20 ... ♖xf5
21 ♘e4 ♖f7?

A mistake which lets White back into the game. To prevent the game continuation Black should have played 21 ... ♗h6!, e.g. 22 ♘g3 ♖f7 23 e4 ♕h4 24 ♖a3 (or 24 ♘f5 ♖xf5 25 g3 — or 25 exf5 g3 with a winning attack — 25 ... ♕h3 26 exf5 ♗e3!! and because of the threat of ... ♕xg3+ Black wins, e.g. 27 fxe3 ♕xg3+ 28 ♔h1 ♕h3+ 29 ♔g1 g3 etc.) 24 ... ♗f4 and Black retains the advantage.

22 f4!

Forcing the capture *en passant* as otherwise after 22 ... ♘g6? 23 ♘g5! the tables would be completely turned.

22 ... gxf3
23 ♗xf3

With the disappearance of the cramping g4 pawn White has gained vital space for defence.

23 ... ♗h6
24 ♕e2 ♕h4
25 g3!

Much better than 25 ♘xd6 ♖f6 26 ♘e4 ♘xf3 27 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 28 ♕xf3 (not 28 gxf3? ♔h8 etc.) 28 ... ♖f8 29 ♕g3+ ♕xg3 30 ♘xg3 ♗xe3+ 31 ♔h2 (31 ♔h1? ♖f4! and wins) with a slightly advantageous ending for Black.

25 ... ♖g7?!

Black keeps the position as complicated as possible in order to profit from the opponent's time trouble. The objectively correct continuation was 25 ... ♘xf3+ 26 ♕xf3 with equal chances.

26 ♖f2!

White avoids 26 ♗g2?! ♖xg3 27 ♘xg3 ♕xg3 28 ♖xa3 (not 28 ♕xh5? ♗xe3+ 29 ♔h1 ♔g7 etc.) 28 ... ♘g4 29 ♖f3 ♕h2+ 30 ♔f1 ♖e8 etc.

26 ... ♖e8?

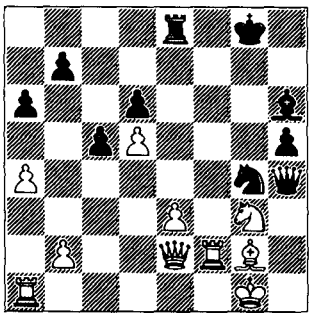
Black continues to play on the opponent's time trouble and this could well have cost him the game. The rook move plans an incorrect combination which White proves incapable of refuting in the limited time available. Black's immediate threat is ... ♘xf3+ winning the ♘e4.

27 ♗g2 ♖xg3

Forced in view of ♘f6+.

28 ♘xg3 ♘g4 *(135)*

135
W



In all likelihood both players had overestimated the dangers of the black knight's arrival on g4 and the consequent threats against e3 and h2. In reality, White could have defended in the diagrammed position and retained a winning material advantage. The correct continuation was 29 ♘f5 ♕h2+ 30 ♔f1 ♗xe3 31 ♖a3! and the pin on Black's bishop would have

been fatal. In the game, however, with his flag hanging, White makes a natural but losing move.

29	**♘f1??**	**♗xe3**
30	**♘xe3**	**♕h2+**
	0–1	

White loses the queen after 31 ♔f1 ♘xe3+ 32 ♔e1 ♘c2+ etc.

Game 10
Petrosian–Nunn
Hastings 1977/78
Knight Tour Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**e6**
4	**♘c3**	**exd5**
5	**cxd5**	**d6**
6	**♘f3**	**g6**
7	**♘d2**	

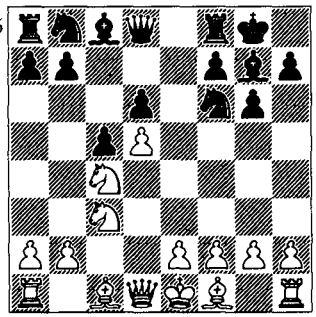
By carrying out the thematic transfer of the KN to c4 first White reserves all his options concerning the QB's development and the placing of the e-pawn. In this variation, therefore, Black must be ready to cope with an attack on his d-pawn.

7	**...**	**♗g7**

The attempt to challenge the ♘c4 by means of ... ♘b8–d7–b6 can be well met by White with a precise order of moves: 7 ... ♘bd7 8 e4! (but not 8 ♘c4 ♘b6 and Black's idea succeeds) 8 ... ♗g7 (after ... ♘b6 the knight would be exposed to the advance a4–a5) 9 ♘c4 ♘b6 10 ♘e3! This position was reached in the game Nimzowitsch–Marshall, New York 1927, in which the Modern Benoni made its debut. There, however, the order of moves was 7 ... ♘bd7 8 ♘c4 ♘b6 9 e4 ♗g7?! (the consistent capture 9 ... ♘xc4 would have given Black equal chances) 10 ♘e3!

8 ♘c4 0-0 *(136)*

136
W



Here White has the choice between 9 ♗f4 and 9 ♗g5. In both cases the fact that White has already transferred the KN to c4 represents an attempt to improve on the immediate development of the QB on the 7th move. Now Black is unable to counter ♗f4 with the thematic ... ♘h5 and similarly on ♗g5, Black cannot follow up ... h6 and ... g5 with ... ♘h5, as we saw in the preceding

game, because of the tempo gained by the attack on d6 when White retreats to g3.

9 ♗g5

After 9 ♗f4 Black must choose between defending the pawn by 9 ... ♘e8 or sacrificing it with moves like 9 ... b6 (the most explored path), 9 ... ♘bd7 or 9 ... ♘a6.

9 ... h6

The modern tendency is to leave the kingside pawns intact and concentrate on the removal of the ♘c4 by 9 ... ♕e7 followed by ... ♘bd7–e5 or ... b6 and ... ♗a6, e.g. 10 e3 (Black has no particular problems after 10 ♕d2 b6 11 ♕f4 ♖d8) 10 ... ♘bd7 (or 10 ... b6 11 a4 ♗a6 with more or less equal chances) 11 ♗e2 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 with about equal prospects.

10 ♗f4

After 10 ♗h4 Black can try the interesting 10 ... ♕d7!? with the twin ideas of ... ♕g4 and ... b5, e.g. 11 ♗g3 (or 11 a4 ♕g4 12 ♗xf6 ♕xc4 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 a5 ♗d7 15 e3 ♕b4 with a balanced position) 11 ... b5 12 ♘xd6 b4 13 ♘a4 ♘h5 with a sharp position where Black appears to have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

The text move transposes back into the 9 ♗f4 line with the difference that Black's h-pawn is on h6. Should Black now decide to protect his pawn by 10 ... ♘e8, White can try to exploit this factor by seeking a kingside attack by means of 11 ♕c1 g5 (on 11 ... ♔h7 comes 12 ♘b5 with advantage) 12 ♗d2 followed by h4.

10 ... b6

Nunn prefers to avoid the defensive line indicated above and decides instead to sacrifice the d-pawn. In the game continuation it makes virtually no difference whatsoever whether Black's h-pawn is on h7 or h6.

11 ♗xd6

11 ♘xd6? ♘h5 12 ♘xc8 ♘xf4 would cost White a piece.

11 ... ♖e8

The idea of Black's sacrifice is based essentially on two factors. Firstly, that the capture of the pawn and retreat of the bishop costs White two tempi which Black can use to activate his kingside pieces, and secondly that the disappearance of the d6 pawn leaves White's d-pawn open to attack down the file.

12 ♗g3

Eschewing 12 ♗xb8? ♖xb8, which would leave Black with a massive advantage in develop-

ment, and parrying the threatened ... ♗a6.

12 ... ♘e4

The key to Black's sacrifice. White is practically forced to exchange knights, thereby opening up pressure on b2 from Black's KB which can be augmented by the transfer of the rook to b4.

13 ♘xe4 ♖xe4
14 e3

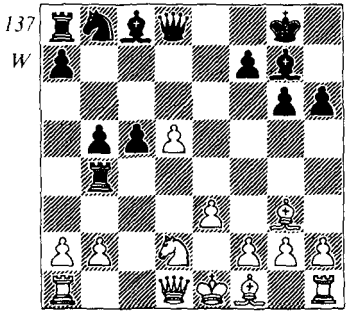
The only way both to protect the knight and avoid 14 ... ♖d4.

14 ... b5
15 ♘d2

Alternatively, White can play 15 ♘d6 ♖b4 16 ♗e2 (but not 16 ♗xb5? ♗f8! 17 ♗c6 ♗a6 18 ♕d2 — 18 ♗xa8 ♖xb2 wins — 18 ... ♘xc6 19 dxc6 ♕f6 20 ♕c3 ♕e6 with clear advantage to Black) 16 ... ♗xb2 and now White can choose between 17 0-0, since 17 ... ♗xa1?! 18 ♕xa1 would clearly be promising for White on account of Black's vulnerable kingside, and 17 ♖b1 ♗c3+ 18 ♔f1 ♖xb1 19 ♕xb1 a6 20 h4 with a very sharp and unclear position. The text move is the most common, perhaps because White's position looks more compact with the knight on d2.

15 ... ♖b4 *(137)*

137
W



One of the most critical positions in this variation, which at various times has been assessed as favourable to both players. In view of the threats against b2 and d5, White can hardly hope to preserve his material advantage but he is no longer so much behind in development and, moreover, Black's rook is rather awkwardly placed on the fifth rank.

The theoretical dispute over this position is still in progress. The great merit of Petrosian's conduct of the present game is in the persuasive simplicity with which he demonstrates how White can return the material in order to break Black's initiative.

16 b3!

Merely a temporary sacrifice, in fact, as with the subsequent development of his KB White snares

the ♖b4 and obliges Black to return the exchange.

16	**...**	**♗xa1?**

This produces a chronic weakening of Black's kingside which White exploits with a truly masterly orchestration of his pieces. Later on it was discovered that Black's correct path is 16 ... c4! 17 bxc4 (17 a3? ♖xb3 18 ♘xb3 cxb3 is very good for Black) 17 ... bxc4 18 ♗xc4 ♗xa1 19 ♕xa1 ♗e6 when the position is unclear and offers chances to both players.

17	**♕xa1**	**♕xd5**
18	**a3**	**♖g4**

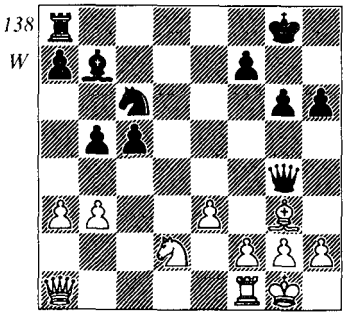
18 ... ♖xb3 is met by 19 ♗e2.

19	**♗e2**	**♘c6**
20	**♗f3!**	

A finesse which forces Black to recapture on g4 with the queen.

20	**...**	**♕e6**
21	**♗xg4**	**♕xg4**
22	**0-0**	**♗b7** *(138)*

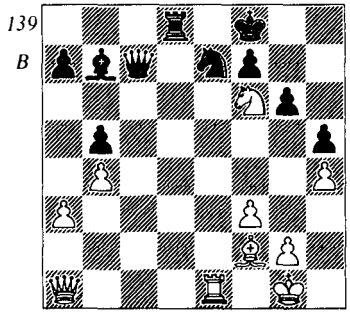
The position has clarified in White's favour largely due to the presence of opposite-coloured bishops which accentuates the weakness of Black's king's position. It takes Petrosian just thirteen powerful and artistic moves to convert this advantage into victory.


138
W

23	**f3!**	**♕e6**
24	**♘e4**	**♖d8**
25	**♘xc5!**	**♕xe3+**
26	**♗f2**	**♕e7**
27	**♖e1**	**♕c7**
28	**h4**	**h5**
29	**♘e4**	

Threatening 30 ♘f6+ ♔f8 31 ♗c5+. Black's reply, as with most of the preceding moves, is forced.

29	**...**	**♘e7**
30	**♘f6+**	**♔f8**
31	**b4!** *(139)*	


139
B

To all intents and purposes the *coup de grâce*, setting up the concluding combination which Black is powerless to avoid.

31 ... ♗c8

So as to meet 32 ♗c5 with 32 ... ♗e6.

32	**♘xh5!**	**gxh5**
33	**♕h8+**	**♘g8**
34	**♗c5+**	**♖d6**
35	**♕e5**	

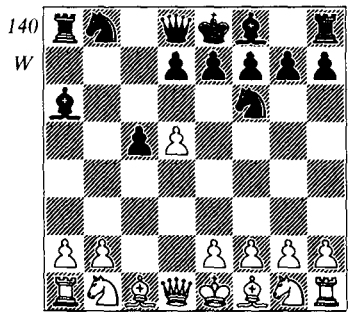
1–0

Part Two

The Benko Gambit

4 The Standard Centre

After 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 ♗xa6 *(140)* ...



... we obtain the basic position of the Benko Gambit Accepted, where Black has positional compensation in return for the sacrificed pawn. The two most important variations now are:

King's Walk Variation
6 ♘c3 d6 7 e4 ♗xf1 8 ♔xf1

Fianchetto System
6 g3

1 Strategic Ideas

Black's compensation can be summarized as follows:

(1) Black's advantage in development.

(2) The vulnerability of White's pawns on a2 and b2 which can be attacked along the a- and b-files and along the diagonals h8–a1 and g8–a2.

(3) White's difficulties in developing given the pressure along the a6–f1 diagonal which discourages e4 and the inevitable pressure against b2 which ties down the ♗c1.

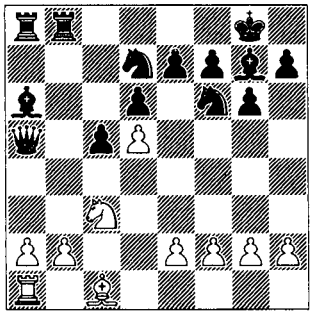
These factors make it very difficult, if not impossible, for White to carry out his natural plan of the central advance e4–e5. The difficulty White encounters in finding a harmonious plan which is not merely defensive is in stark contrast to the ease with which Black can purposefully develop his forces.

Black's plan of development

From the position in diagram 140 Black's basic plan of development, as efficient as it is direct, is as follows: the fianchetto of the KB

(... g6 and ... ♗g7) followed by castling, the placing of the QN on d7 (... d6 and ... ♘bd7), the development of the queen along the d8–a5 diagonal (on c7, b6, or a5) and the transfer of the KR to b8 *(141)*.

141



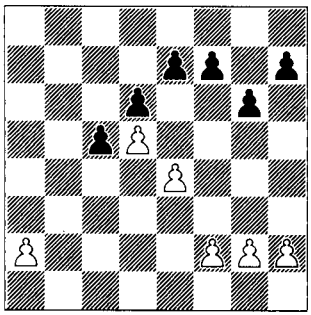
Here Black generally has recourse to the manoeuvre ... ♘f6–e8–c7–b5 in order to activate the ♗g7 and increase his pressure on the queenside, but not infrequently — especially when White has weakened d3 by the advance e4 — this knight also goes to e5 via either g4 or d7. As for the QN, from d7 it can join in the pressure on the enemy queenside pawns by means of the manoeuvre ... ♘d7–b6–c4 (or –a4). It should also be noted that in the variation where the white-squared bishops are exchanged early on after e4 and ... ♗xf1, Black may decide instead to develop the QN on a6 in order to pressurize both the pawn on a2 and the square d3 by ... ♘b4. In this latter case, too, it may even happen that the knights switch rôles: ... ♘b8–a6–c7 and ... ♘f6–d7.

The possibility of the advance ... c4 also features constantly in Black's plans. This may be useful simply for freeing c5 and exploiting a possible weakness on d3, or alternatively for breaking up a defensive structure where White has played b3. Finally, a doubling of the rooks on either the a- or b-file may be conclusive in winning back one of the white pawns.

Favourable endings for Black

If Black regains his pawn he can invariably count on obtaining a very favourable ending since White's remaining queenside pawn will be a real weakness *(142)*.

142

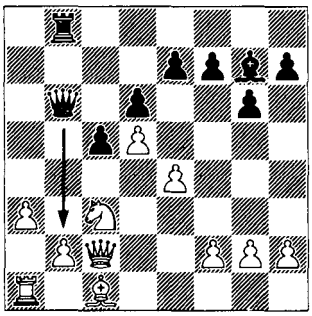


The diagram illustrates a hypothetical skeleton of an ending where Black has regained the b-pawn. Both sides have passed

pawns, but whereas White's, on a2, — despite being an outside passed pawn — is isolated and therefore weak, Black's on c5 — despite being quite central — is protected and therefore strong. Similar considerations apply when White has lost the a-pawn instead and remains with the b-pawn.

More surprisingly, it should be observed that Black can also usually be happy to enter an ending where White retains his extra pawn but has been induced to weaken his queenside structure by a3 *(143)*.

143



Normally the weakness on b3 is sufficient for Black to immobilize the b-pawn and, in fact, an exchange of queens fails to diminish Black's pressure in the slightest.

The mobilization of White's kingside

As we have already remarked, White finds it as difficult to mobilize his kingside as his queenside, but logically the most pressing problem is that concerning the tension on the a6–f1 diagonal. He must choose between following the natural plan of central expansion (♘c3 and e4) and thereby giving up castling, or forgoing — or at least considerably delaying — the e4 advance, opting instead to prepare castling by fianchettoing the KB. In addition to these two methods, which are much the most common in practice, there exists a conceptual hybrid which we will examine later on.

As far as the mobilization of the queenside is concerned, to a large extent White's options are linked to the decisions taken on the kingside and we will therefore examine them both together.

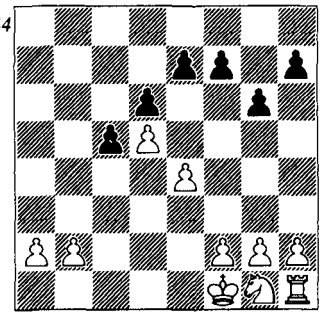
White gives up castling

When White plays e4 and permits the exchange of light-squared bishops, thereby losing the right to castle, he is obliged to find a way to castle artificially in order to activate the ♖h1 *(144)*.

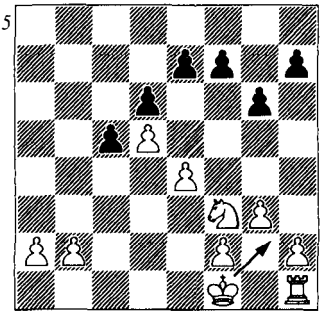
By far the most common system is to play ♘f3 in conjunction with g3 thus freeing g2 for the king *(145)*.

White's idea is to get the KR into play on e1 as quickly as

144



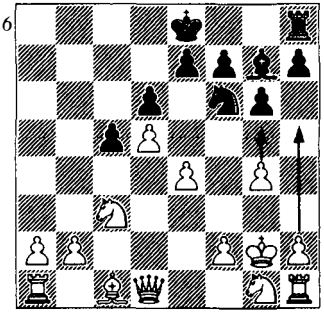
145



possible in order to try to make the central break e5. The drawback of this plan, however, is that it further weakens the white squares. Consequently, White has even tried playing h3 instead of g3 and continuing with ♔g1–h2 with the same idea of playing ♖e1 as soon as possible. However, this manoeuvre costs an extra tempo which, at this stage of the game, and given that White is already behind in development, is probably more of a problem than the defects of g3. In any case, these lines follow the same strategy and the examples given below are valid for both.

One other possibility for White in the type of position outlined in diagram 144 is to make way for the king by g4 in which case the KR may be used quite differently *(146)*.

146

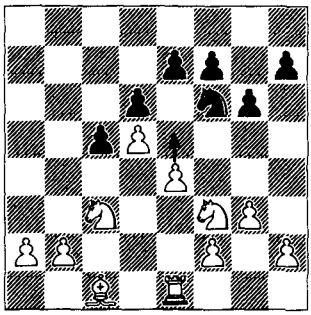


Should Black castle prematurely, White intends to blitz the black king by storming the kingside with his pawns, after which there are possibilities of bringing the queen to the h-file via g4 or f3, and developing the KN on g3 via e2. It should be noted that this plan has not yet been played sufficiently to reliably assess its worth.

The central breakthrough e4–e5

When White plays his KR to e1, the intention is to try and effect the central breakthrough e4–e5 *(147)*.

147



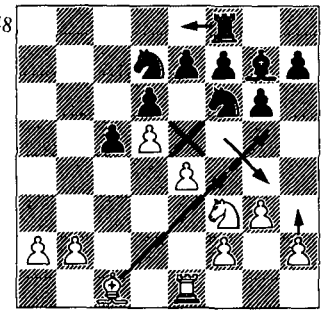
It should not be thought that the execution of this plan automatically constitutes a success for White, however, as the efficacy of the e5 advance is directly proportional to the solidity of the queenside.

The central breakthrough is best seen as a means of re-establishing positional parity rather than the beginning of a violent assault on the black king. In other words, the aim is to weaken the opponent's pawn structure, hoping thereby to be able to distract him from his incessant pounding of the a- and b-pawns. Once White has played e5, Black cannot avoid a downgrading of his pawn structure since capturing by ... dxe5 leaves the pawns on e7 and c5 weak, whilst not capturing leaves d6 weak after exd6 exd6. In the latter case, White also obtains the open e-file which is useful for exchanging the heavy pieces.

The struggle for control of e5

In view of the preceding ideas, it is not surprising that both players pay particular attention to the control of e5. White may develop the QB on f4 or g5, in the latter case pinning the ♘f6 against the e-pawn should it be undefended, whilst Black may manoeuvre his knights to converge on e5 or at least move the KN thereby uncovering the KB *(148)*.

148



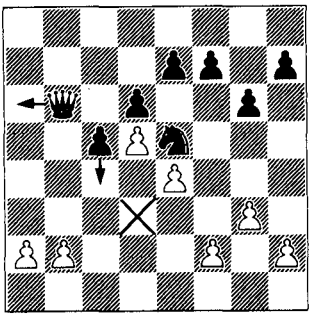
Black is ready, after ♗g5, to defend his e-pawn passively with the KR, if needs be, to enable his KN to move. Similarly, White often decides to sacrifice a tempo in playing h3 in order to keep e5 from falling into Black's hands.

In addition to the way indicated in the diagram, it should be remembered that Black's knights can also converge on e5 in rather more elaborate fashion by ... ♘d7–b6–c4 and ... ♘f6–d7.

The weakness of the squares d3 and d4

If Black establishes a knight on e5 it can serve as a springboard to exploit the sensitive square d3 *(149)*.

149

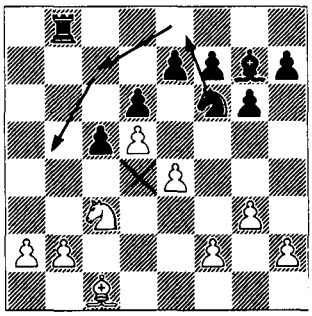


Here Black can either fix the d3 square with his pawn by ... c4 (which may also be useful for freeing c5 for a ♘d7), or use the queen to converge on it with his pieces. As can easily be imagined, the conquest of d3 nearly always represents a great strategic success for Black, whether simply from the positional point of view or because of the extra pressure exerted on the b-pawn.

Another weakness which Black can try to exploit is the d4 square, to occupy which he generally uses the manoeuvre ... ♘f6–e8–c7–b5–d4 *(150)*.

In addition, the QN can carry out a very similar manoeuvre by ... ♘b8–a6–c7–b5–d4 and of

150



course the KB also plays its part in the occupation of d4. White will not normally allow a black knight to install itself on d4 and will exchange it in transit on b5. This simplification, however, lays bare the vulnerable b2 pawn.

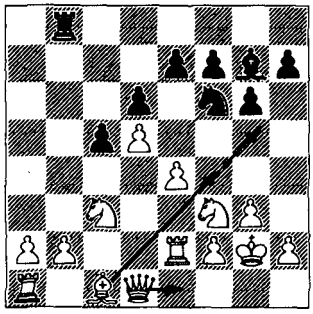
It will be observed that the weakness of the d4 and d3 squares is a direct result of White's decision to pursue the plan of central expansion with e4.

The manoeuvre ♖h1–e1–e2 and the mobilization of the queenside

White's biggest problem on the queenside is the defence of the b-pawn which usually cannot be advanced because of discovered attacks on the long diagonal against the ♖a1. Faced with Black's pressure down the b-file and the necessity of mobilizing his queenside, White is obliged to protect his b-pawn and the most

usual way of doing this is to continue the manoeuvre of the KR with ♖e2 *(151)*.

151

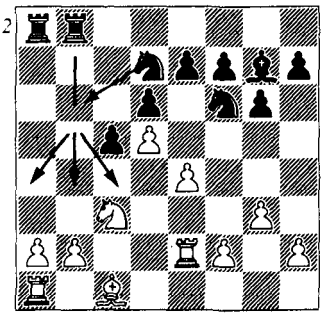


Thus White is able to develop the QB and at the same time frees a safe square (e1) for possible use by the queen which in turn would enable the QR to be centralized. Of course, this rook manoeuvre is not the only way for White to unravel his queenside. Sometimes, for example, he may defend the b-pawn by placing the queen on e2 or c2, or even by simply playing ♖b1.

Pressure against the pawns on b2 and e4

Black will naturally do all he can to keep White tied down to the defence of his pawns so as to prevent him from completing his development. There are two basic methods of increasing the pressure against b2: doubling the rooks on the b-file, or bringing a knight to c4 or a4 *(152)*.

152



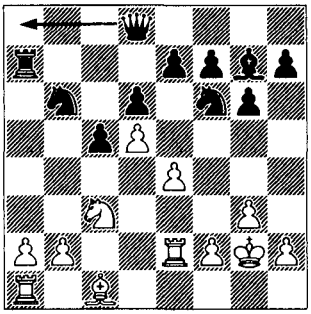
Black can prepare to double rooks by playing ... ♖b4, which also puts pressure on e4 and increases the possibilities of occupying d4. The two possible destinations of the knight contain different subsidiary ideas: when the knight goes to c4 it may also have designs on e5, and when it goes to a4 it can also serve to undermine the ♘c3. In fact, White usually answers ... ♘a4 by ♘c3–d1 so as not to help the opponent double his rooks. This also not only enables White to use Black's own knight as a shield on the a-file, but also prepares a possible transfer to e3 from where the knight may prove useful either on the queenside (c4) or the kingside (g4).

Pressure against the pawns on a2 and d5

Black can also organize pressure simultaneously against the pawns on a2 and d5 by playing ... ♖a8–

a7 and ... ♕d8–a8 *(153)*.

153

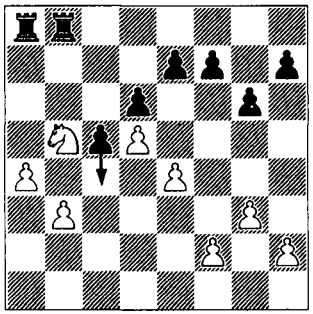


The object of the pressure on a2 is self-evident, whereas that on d5 acts more subtly as a prophylactic against White's central e5 breakthrough and also creates a favourable opposition of queen and king on the long diagonal. Black can sometimes increase his pressure on the a8–h1 diagonal in general, and on d5 in particular, by playing either ... e6 or ... f5 at the right moment. It should be noted that the black queen may also exert pressure on the long diagonal from b7.

Blockading the a- and b-files

The ideal way for White to escape from Black's constant pressure down the a- and b-files is by setting up a blockade. This possibility normally arises at a later stage of the game when it may be achieved by means of the advances b3 and a4 coupled with ♘b5 *(154)*.

154



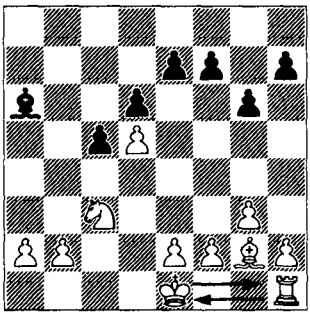
It should not be thought, however, that this defensive formation by itself automatically resolves all White's problems. Black still has the possibility of undermining the blockade by means of ... c4, and therefore White's set-up only becomes really solid when he also has c4 or a4 under control.

White fianchettoes on the kingside

Returning to diagram 140, the simplest way for White to get castled is to fianchetto the KB *(155)*.

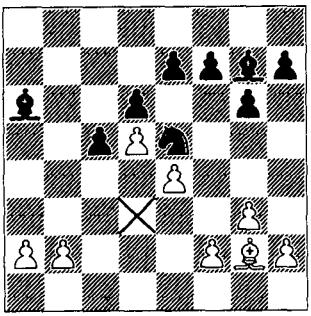
Whilst the fianchetto successfully solves White's most immediate problems, it implies giving up the natural plan of central expansion, as this would weaken the white squares. Having given the a6–f1 diagonal to Black, the d3

155



square would be particularly weak and easily exploited by a knight on e5 *(156)*.

156



It should not be forgotten that the advance e4 also permanently weakens d4 which can be reached by Black's KB and knights via c7 and b5.

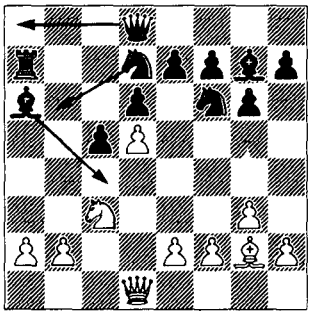
Thus it is not surprising that it is quite exceptional for White to implement this plan, and if he does it will need to be prepared very carefully with moves such as h3 trying to keep Black from getting a knight to e5.

Given that White himself is in no hurry to play e4 after fianchettoing, Black will try to force him to do so by pressurizing d5.

Pressure against d5

Black can bring pressure to bear on d5 with various standard manoeuvres which simultaneously pursue other important objectives *(157)*.

157



For example, ... ♖a7 combined with ... ♕a8 also puts pressure on a2. The same applies to the provocative ... ♗c4, whilst the posting of a knight on b6 may prelude the occupation of c4 with consequent pressure on b2. In addition, should the thematic manoeuvre ... ♘f6–e8–c7 (–b5) be halted on c7, the protection of d5 may be diminished by the radical ... ♗xc3. Despite the obvious positional drawbacks of this capture, it is sometimes possible for Black to regain the gambited pawn

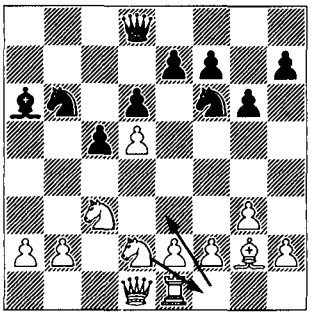
in this way without necessarily losing all his initiative.

The vulnerability of d5 is greater when White develops his KN on the natural f3 square instead of h3, which is more artificial but better suited to the protection of d5.

Protecting d5 after ♘f3

When White has played ♘f3 he will generally follow up with ♘d2 in order to protect d5 with the KB. Having blocked the defensive action of the queen, however, he may be obliged to continue his defensive manoeuvre further by, for example, ♖e1 and ♘f1 (–e3) according to the amount of pressure on d5 *(158)*.

158



In optimal conditions White can sometimes use the rook on e1 to revert to his basic plan of a central breakthrough with e4–e5.

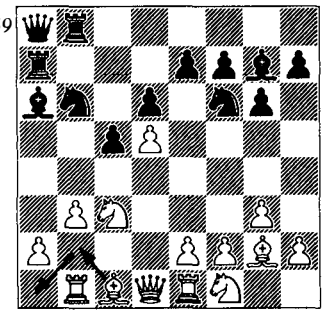
Alternatively, White may sometimes opt for the placement ♕c2 and ♖fd1 if the prospects for the rook on e1 do not look too good.

Queenside development combined with b2–b3

As we saw in diagram 157, Black's manoeuvres are not solely directed at encouraging White to protect d5 by playing e4 but also fulfil the function of pressurizing the queenside pawns. Naturally, White is not going to stand idly by while all this is going on.

Assuming that sooner or later Black will need to uncover the action of his heavy pieces down the a- and/or b-files by removing the ♗a6 and/or ♘b6, it is readily understandable that their most suitable destination is c4. In view of this, the potentially paralysing effect of the simple advance b3 is clear *(159)*.

159

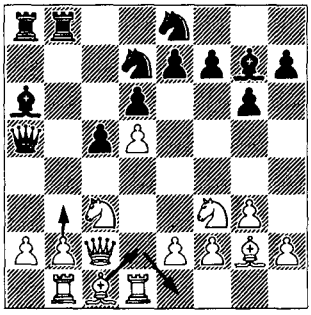


In preparation of the b3 advance, White naturally needs to take the commonsense precaution

of removing his QR from the long diagonal in order to avoid various discovered attacks. The basic idea is to contest the long black diagonal and develop the queenside by means of ♗b2 followed by ♗a1 if necessary (see below: 'The pseudo-sacrifice ... ♖xb2'). Although the control of c4 afforded by b3 reduces Black's options, he still has plenty of strategic weapons in his arsenal such as ... ♘e8–c7–b5 or ... ♗c8–f5 (this latter especially when White has played ♕c2 and ♖fd1).

Black will of course try to prevent the formation of the defensive structure shown in the above diagram, for example by playing ... ♕a5 in order to prevent b3 *(160)*.

160



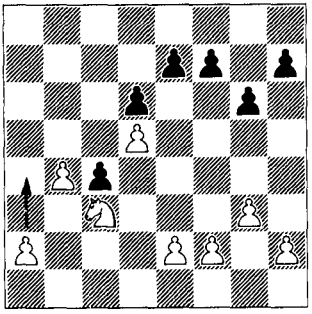
In this kind of position White can try to play b3 by first protecting the ♘c3 by ♗d2, retreating to e1 if necessary. Even here, however, Black may continue with the manoeuvre ... ♘e8–c7–b5, and sometimes it is possible to play ... ♗xc3 followed by ... ♕xa2.

No matter where Black has placed his queen, he should always bear in mind the possibility of playing ... c4 as long as White is not able to block the queenside with b4.

The b4 advance

The accomplishment of the b4 advance can generally be considered a strategic success for White even if it does not close up the queenside. Thus there are basically two types of structure which are favourable to White *(161)*.

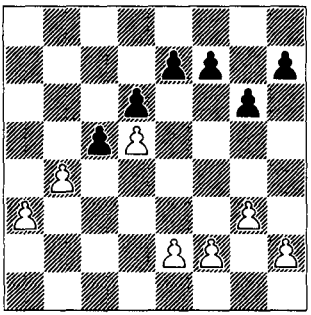
161



This kind of position is normally very promising, and if White succeeds in securely blockading Black's c-pawn whilst at the same time retaining the mobility of his own a-pawn, then Black will be strategically lost.

The more fluid situation in the next diagram is also strategically favourable for White *(162)*.

162



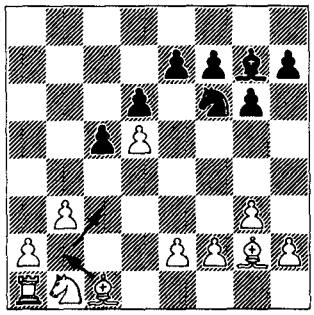
White has already favourably altered the pawn structure to avoid the dangers indicated earlier (see 'Favourable endings for Black') and no matter how Black reacts White is well placed to convert his extra pawn.

It goes without saying that these concepts are merely a general guide and it must always be remembered that specific situations demand concrete analysis.

The manoeuvre ♗c1–b2–c3

As was made clear in diagram 161, when White plays b3 he should ideally be ready to meet ... c4 with b4. Not surprisingly, however, this is not always possible as Black often has b4 under control (see, for example, diagram 160). The best way for White to try and ensure that things will go his way is to manoeuvre his bishop to c3 as quickly as possible. This can only be achieved by forgoing the natural development of the QN and answering Black's kingside fianchetto with an immediate queenside fianchetto followed, at the appropriate moment, by ♗c3 *(163)*.

163

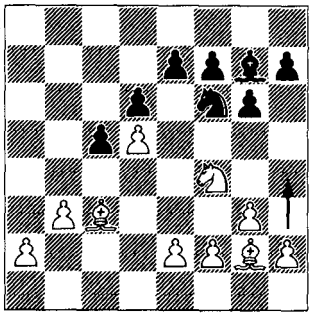


Once the QB reaches c3 White will be ready to meet any ... c4 advance with b4. With this rapid manoeuvre White establishes a favourable tension on the long diagonal, in contrast to that which obtains in situations of the type illustrated in diagram 159. However, the active placing of the QB has some negative repercussions, not only for the QN, which is obliged to find a less active development, but also for the d-pawn which lacks the QN's support. To remedy this latter problem, White must resort to a somewhat artificial development of the KN.

The manoeuvre ♘g1–h3–f4

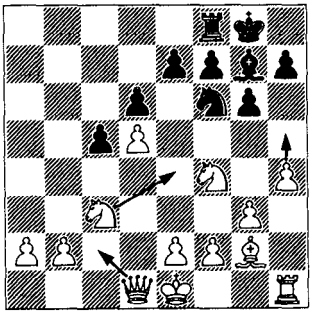
As has just been indicated, the basic idea behind this manoeuvre, when it is linked with the fianchetto of the QB, is to protect d5 *(164)*.

164



In such positions, the ♘f4 can easily be secured by means of h4 if necessary. White can also manoeuvre his KN to f4 without fianchettoing the QB, in which case he may also try to use the advance of the h-pawn to weaken g6 and develop an attack on the h-file by means of h4–h5xg6 *(165)*.

165



Although it is difficult for White to transfer the queen to the h-file, he can nevertheless usefully increase the pressure on the enemy king by placing it on the b1–h7 diagonal. He can also weaken Black's king's position in general, and h7 in particular, by exchanging his QN for the ♘f6. Black's king will also be weakened if he decides either to answer h5 by ... g5 or to prevent h5 by playing ... h5 himself. In this latter case, as also after the opening of the h-file, White will constantly be looking at a possible ♘f4–e6 sacrifice after which, according to circumstances, he may either simply capture on g6 with the queen or on e6 with the pawn thereby opening the long white diagonal.

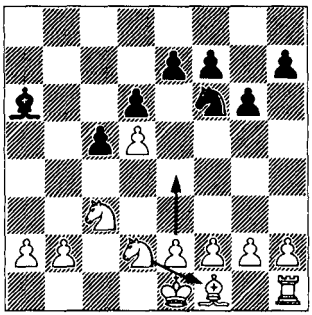
These attacking ideas are necessarily general and are therefore by no means assured of success. Nevertheless, Black must not underestimate the potential danger and the need to defend with care, using little finesses like the rapid centralization of the QN on e5 — taking advantage of the fact that the placing of White's ♘f4 makes it safe — and/or delaying castling.

The hybrid attempt

Returning once more to the position in diagram 140, another

attempt by White to solve the problem of the tension on the a6–f1 diagonal should also be noted. This is a hybrid conception whereby White tries to carry out his natural plan of central expansion (by ♘c3 and e4) and at the same time maintain the possibility of castling. The idea is to first play ♘g1–f3–d2 and only then play e2–e4 *(166)*.

166



The intention is to recapture on f1 with the knight and then play ♘e3 so as to be able to castle. The game would then basically follow the same strategy as in the lines where White plays e4. The whole manoeuvre is clearly rather tortuous and time-consuming, however, and thus little played.

2 Tactical Ideas

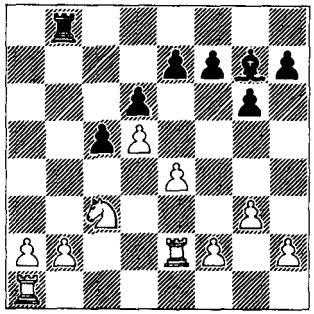
As one can well imagine, the majority of the tactical themes in the Standard Centre come from Black, which is not surprising given that he has sacrificed a pawn in order to increase the dynamism of his position.

It goes almost without saying that in the middlegame the tactical ideas multiply exponentially — assuming in this case very specific characteristics — and in what follows we necessarily restrict ourselves to those themes which recur and are applicable in various situations.

The pseudo-sacrifice ... ♖xb2

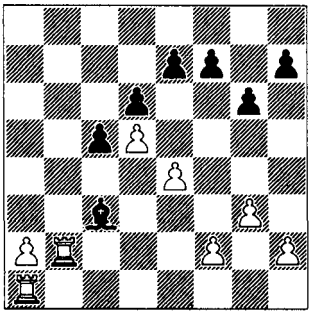
The most common tactical theme. It can arise in various ways either in the lines where White gives up castling or in those where White fianchettoes his KB. Here are some examples *(167)*.

167



The diagram shows the theme in one of its most elementary forms: Black plays ... ♖xb2! and after ♖xb2 there comes ... ♗xc3 *(168)*.

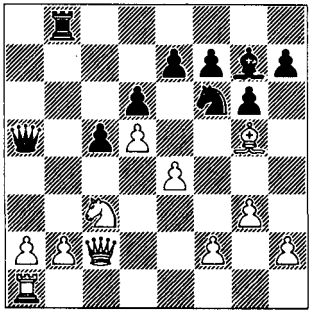
168



In this case Black merely regains his pawn, but, as we have already seen, the majority of endings are very favourable for him.

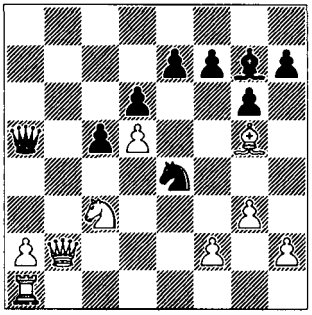
It is worth noting, in passing, that this combination can also work with different placements of White's rooks (for example, ♖b1 and ♖e1), and can even be carried out when b2 is protected by White's queen if the ♘c3 is attacked sufficiently *(169)*.

169



White must be particularly careful when he has played ♗g5 (this makes the combination good for Black, but it may well also be playable with the bishop on a different square) and Black has placed his queen on a5. From the diagram, Black plays ... ♖xb2!, ♕xb2 ♘xe4 *(170)* ...

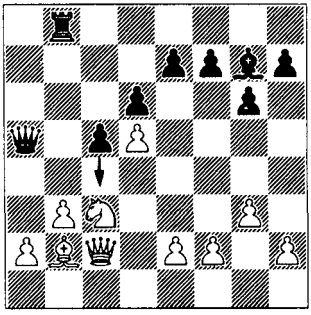
170



... and at the very least Black regains the sacrificed material.

This combination can also appear in a slightly modified form when White has fianchettoed queenside *(171)*.

171



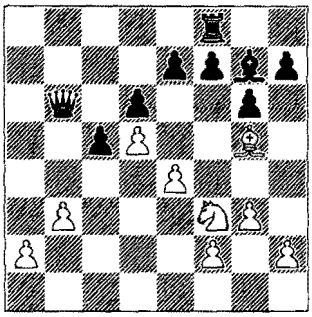
Black can weaken the opponent's defensive shield by playing ... c4 since bxc4? is not

possible on account of ... ♖xb2, ♕xb2 ♗xc3 with a positionally favourable simplification for Black.

Indirect defence of the e7 pawn

White sometimes tries to take advantage of the lack of protection of the e7 pawn by playing ♗g5. He must be careful, however, as if the d6 pawn is protected by a piece the e-pawn can be defended indirectly *(172)*.

172

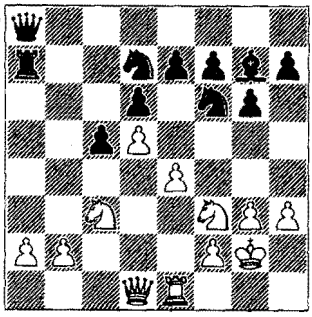


In this type of position, for example, Black can answer White's attack on e7 by ... h6 as after ♗xe7 ♖e8, ♗h4 g5 White is forced to give up a piece for three pawns. Even though in the end there may be equality from the material point of view, positionally it is clear that in the initial phase of the game the piece is qualitatively superior.

Preventing the central breakthrough

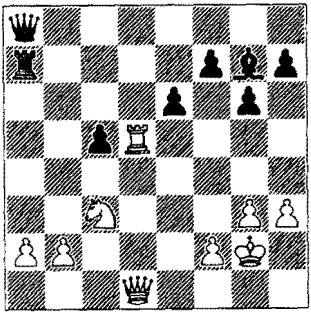
Another tactical theme arises when Black simultaneously exerts pressure on both long diagonals *(173)*.

173



In such conditions White must be careful not to proceed too hastily with his central breakthrough with e5? dxe5, ♘xe5 ♘xe5, ♖xe5, having decided that he has nothing to fear from a discovered attack on the long black diagonal, because in fact after ... ♘xd5! White loses the exchange, e.g. ♖xd5 e6 *(174)* ...

174

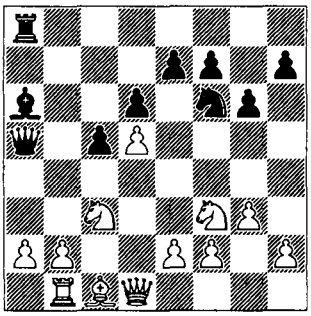


... and the pin on the long white diagonal condemns the rook.

The boomerang trap

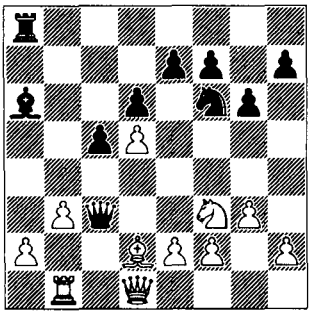
When White fianchettoes the KB there sometimes arises the apparently attractive possibility of luring the black queen into a trap by using the QN as bait *(175)*.

175



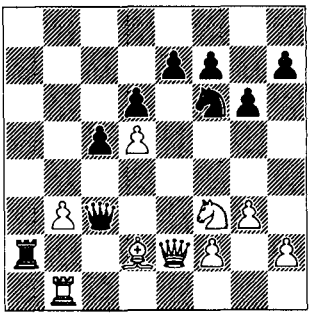
In order to develop the QB on b2 as quickly as possible, White may be tempted by the possibility of playing b3? expecting to trap the queen after ... ♕xc3, ♗d2 *(176)*.

176



But things boomerang spectacularly after ... ♗xe2!, ♕xe2 ♖xa2 *(177)*.

177

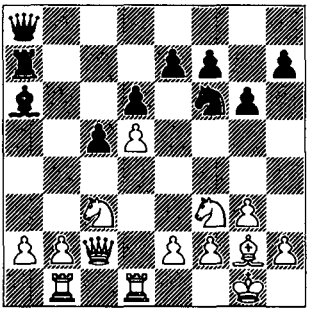


The tactical sequence finishes with White two pawns down.

Indirect defence of the d5 pawn

White's most common tactical themes are defensive traps aimed at protecting this or that pawn. These mostly occur when White has fianchettoed kingside *(178)*.

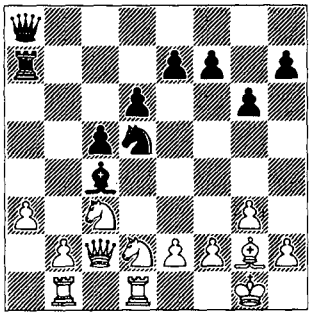
178



At first sight it seems that Black can win a pawn with ... ♗c4, but

in fact White can protect both pawns by playing a3. Now ... ♘xd5? would cost a piece after ♘d2! *(179)* ...

179



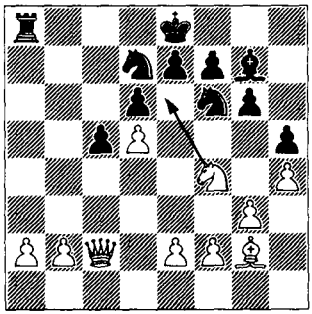
... and ... ♗xd5?!, ♘xd5 ♘xd5 would allow White to exploit the awkward pin on the long diagonal by, for example, ♘d2 e6, ♘c4 followed by e4, regaining the pawn advantageously.

The sacrifice ♘e6

The preconditions for a typical knight sacrifice are fulfilled when White fianchettoes the KB and follows up with the manoeuvre ♘g1–h3–f4 *(180)*.

This idea occurs quite frequently in various situations and therefore it is impossible to identify a standard combination. With this example, therefore, we have simply sought to illustrate the compensation White obtains after ♘e6 fxe6, dxe6: the weakness on

180



g6, the opening of the long diagonal, and the dangerous pawn on e6.

3 Illustrative Games

Game 11
Spassky–Vaganian
Linares 1985
King's Walk Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**b5**
4	**cxb5**	**a6**
5	**bxa6**	**♗xa6**

From time to time Black has experimented with the attempt to totally destroy the enemy centre by 5 ... e6. One possible continuation is 6 ♘c3 ♘xd5 7 ♘xd5 exd5 8 ♕xd5 ♘c6 9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 ♘e5!? 0-0 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 13 e3 ♗f6 14 ♗c4 ♗xa6 15 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 16 ♔e2 c4! and despite the pawn minus and doubled pawns it seems that Black can hold the position.

Black can also consider postponing the capture on a6 by playing ... g6, which not only reserves the possibility of taking on a6 with the knight, but also, more subtly, seeks to outwit White concerning the move order. The main idea is to avoid one of White's possible set-ups in the Fianchetto System, and therefore we consider the implications of this variation in the note to Black's fifth move in Game 12. In this game we will concentrate on the variations where White quickly plays e4, thereby losing the right to castle and sending his king for a walk.

6	**♘c3**	**d6**
7	**e4**	

As we have already pointed out, White can also try to have it both ways (playing e4 and retaining castling rights) by playing ♘g1–f3–d2 in order to be able to recapture on f1 with the knight after playing e4, thus keeping the right to castle. This plan is not popular, however, partly because White's manoeuvre is a bit tortuous, and partly because Black has more than one satisfactory reply. For example, 7 ♘f3 g6 8 ♘d2 ♗g7 (Black can also throw a spanner in the works with 8 ... ♕a5, preventing e4, and obliging White either to transpose to the Fianchetto System or lose even more time with 9 f3) 9 e4 ♗xf1 (simply 9 ... 0-0 is also playable, e.g. 10 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 ♘c4 ♘c7 13 ♕e2 ♕b8 14 ♗d2 ♘b5) 10 ♘xf1 0-0 11 ♘e3 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♕b6 13 ♕c2 ♖fb8 14 ♖b1 ♘e8 15 ♗d2 ♕a6 16 b3 ♘c7 with balanced chances.

White has also experimented with 7 f4, aimed at trying to speed up a central breakthrough, e.g. 7 ... g6 8 ♘f3 ♗g7 9 e4 ♗xf1 10 ♖xf1 0-0 (10 ... ♕b6 would cut across White's plans somewhat and make it more difficult for him to carry out his artificial castling) 11 ♔f2 ♘bd7 12 ♔g1 with a double-edged position.

7	**...**	**♗xf1**
8	**♔xf1**	**g6**

White's most sensible plan here is to get his king into safety with 9 g3 as soon as possible so as to be able to implement the manoeuvre ♖h1–e1–e2 and see to his queenside development. A more aggressive version of this plan, aimed at making use of the KR on its original square, has also been tried: 9 g4 ♗g7 10 ♔g2 (10 g5 is premature as it weakens the c8–h3 diagonal, e.g. 10 ... ♘h5 11 ♘ge2 ♕c8! 12 ♔g2 ♕g4+ 13 ♘g3 ♘f4+ 14 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 15 h4 0-0 16 ♖h3 ♗xc3! 17 bxc3 f6! and White's exposed king comes under attack) 10 ... 0-0? (Black under-

estimates the danger of White's rustic attack and castles into big trouble) 11 g5! ♘fd7 (here Black does not have time to make good use of the c8–h3 diagonal, e.g. 11 ... ♘h5 12 ♘ge2 ♕c8 13 ♘g3 etc.) 12 h4 ♘a6 13 h5 ♕c7 14 ♕g4 ♖fb8 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♕h4 and Black is unlikely to survive.

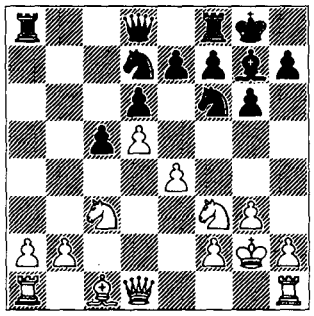
9 g3

A possibly rather unjustly neglected alternative is to shelter the king on h2 instead, e.g. 9 ♘f3 ♗g7 10 h3 0-0 11 ♔g1 ♘bd7 12 ♔h2 ♕a5 13 ♖e1 ♖fb8 14 ♖e2 ♖b4 15 ♔g1 ♘e8 and here White has tried the interesting idea 16 ♖c2 (which can equally well occur in the main line), freeing e2 for the queen, and Black dare not reply 16 ... ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♖xe4 18 c4! because of the exposed position of the black rook.

9	**...**	**♗g7**
10	**♔g2**	**0-0**
11	**♘f3**	

The alternative development 11 ♘ge2!?, protecting the ♘c3 in order to be able to continue with ♖b1, a3 and b4, may deserve more attention than it has hitherto received. One possible continuation: 11 ... ♕b6 12 ♖b1 ♘a6 (12 ... ♘bd7?! 13 a3 etc. allows White to carry out his plan) 13 a3 ♖ab8 (threatening ... ♕b3) 14 b3 e6 15 ♕d3 with chances for both sides.

11 ... ♘bd7 *(181)*


181
W

This move aims to get a knight on e5 by following up with ... ♘f6–g4–e5 and thus White often replies with 12 h3. The alternative development of the QN on a6 enables White to dispense with this prophylaxis since Black no longer threatens to get a knight to e5.

Now White must decide whether or not to allow Black to proceed with his intended knight manoeuvre.

12 ♖e1

Spassky decides against preventing the manoeuvre. After the alternative 12 h3 Black has several very different plans available:

(1) 12 ... ♕a5 13 ♖e1 ♖fb8 (13 ... ♘b6 allows White to push on

in the centre with 14 e5 ♘fd7 15 ♗g5 ♖fe8 16 e6!?) 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♖xe5 ♖a7! and despite the fact that White has achieved his central breakthrough, Black can still bring pressure to bear on White's weak pawns (by ... ♖d7, ... ♖bd8 and ... ♕a8 in the case of the d-pawn) and thus chances remain approximately equal.

(2) 12 ... ♕b6 13 ♖e1 ♘e8 14 ♕c2 ♘c7 15 ♖b1 ♖fb8 16 ♗g5 h6! and the weakening of the kingside following the piece sacrifice 17 ♗xe7?! ♖e8 18 ♗h4 g5 19 ♗xg5 hxg5 20 ♘xg5 does not particularly trouble Black, e.g. 20 ... ♘b5 21 e5!? dxe5! and the black queen can join in the defence horizontally.

(3) 12 ... ♕b8 13 ♖e1 ♕b7 14 ♖e2 ♘b6 15 ♖b1 ♘fd7 16 ♗f4 (on 16 ♕c2 f5! 17 exf5 ♖xf5 18 ♖xe7 ♖xf3! 19 ♔xf3 ♘e5+ 20 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 and the white king's exposed position on the long diagonal gives Black ample compensation for the material) 16 ... ♘c4 17 b3 ♘ce5 with equal chances.

(4) 12 ... ♘b6 (one basic idea behind this move is to secure the exchange of the ♘c3 by ... ♕d7 and ... ♘a4) 13 ♖e1 ♕d7 14 ♕c2 (this is directed against 14 ... ♘a4?! which can now be answered by 15 ♘d1! intending to mobilize the queenside by ♖b1, b3, ♘c3 followed, if possible, by a4 and ♘b5; another possibility is 14 a4) 14 ... ♕b7 with a very similar position to that seen in variation 3.

(5) 12 ... ♖a7 13 ♖e1 ♕a8 14 ♖e2 (14 e5? fails here because of the thematic tactical riposte 14 ... dxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♖xe5 ♘xd5! etc.) 14 ... ♘b6 with typical counterplay.

12 ... ♘g4

Black continues consistently. It is, however, by no means clear what is Black's best line at this point and many other moves have been played, generally transposing into the above variations since White sooner or later usually finds it necessary to play h3.

13 ♖e2

The attempt to turn the ♘e5 into a target means of gaining time and space appears too loosening, e.g. 13 ♕e2 ♘ge5 14 ♘d2?! ♘b6 15 f4 ♘ed7 16 ♘f3 ♘a4 17 ♘d1 ♖a7! 18 ♖b1 ♕a8 19 ♕c2 ♘ab6 20 a3 e6 and White's centre comes under attack.

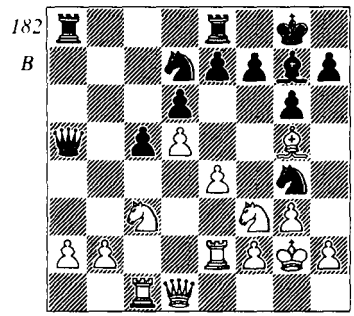
13 ... ♕a5

There is no need for Black to hurry to complete the knight manoeuvre and he would rather wait until White expends a tempo on h3.

14 ♗g5

Developing the queenside with gain of tempo, since d6 is not protected by a piece and therefore Black cannot reply with 14 ... h6.

14 ... ♖fe8
15 ♖c1 *(182)*



White intends to complete the mobilization of his queenside and connect his rooks by ♖cc2, thereby keeping everything well defended and enabling the QB to retreat to c1 if necessary.

15 ... ♘b6?!

It may seem strange for this move to be dubious, as it is after all a normal idea in this type of centre, but it fits ill with Black's 12th and breaks the coordination of the knights. The logical continuation was to concentrate on the weakest point in White's fortified position, the d3 square. For example, 15 ... ♕a6! 16 b3 ♘ge5 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♘a4 ♖ab8 19 ♗d2 c4! with a strong initiative.

16 h3!

Spassky seizes his opportunity to simplify the position advantageously.

16 ... ♘e5
17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5

In contrast to the knight, the presence of a bishop on e5 does nothing to further Black's plans.

18 ♕d3 ♕b4

Here 18 ... ♘a4?! 19 ♘xa4! ♕xa4 20 b3 would leave Black with very little indeed to show for the pawn.

19 a3 ♕a5
20 ♘d1! c4?!

Black sees his initiative dissipating in view of the threatened regrouping ♗d2–c3 and therefore feels it necessary to try to do something, even at the cost of compromising his pawn structure.

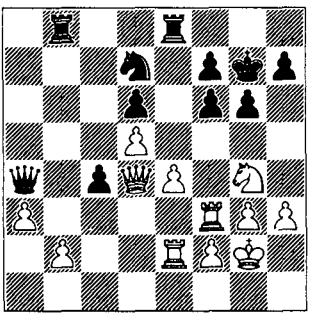
21 ♕d2

Any ending would favour White because of the weakness on c4. Black is therefore obliged to avoid the exchange of queens. Now Spassky gradually improves his position.

21	**...**	**♕a6**
22	**♘e3**	**♗g7**
23	**♘g4**	**♘d7**
24	**♗h6**	**♗h8**
25	**♗e3**	**♖ab8**
26	**♗d4**	

With the challenge to Black's control of the long black diagonal, White's advantage assumes decisive proportions. The simple threat now is 27 ♘h6+.

26	**...**	**♗f6**
27	**♖c3**	**♕a4**
28	**♗xf6**	**exf6**
29	**♕d4**	**♔g7**
30	**♖f3** *(183)*	



White inexorably increases the pressure and Black is forced to give up material.

30	**...**	**♖e5**
31	**♘xe5**	**dxe5**

31 ... ♘xe5 32 ♖c3 would be equally hopeless.

32	**♕d2**	**♘c5**
33	**♖c3**	**♕b5**
34	**♕c2**	

Now the c-pawn disappears and with it Black's last hopes.

34	**...**	**f5**
35	**♖xc4**	

Here all roads lead to Rome and Spassky chooses one of the quickest.

35	**...**	**♘xe4**
36	**f3**	**♘f6**
37	**♖b4**	**♕e8**
38	**♖xb8**	**♕xb8**
39	**♕c3**	

1–0

Game 12
Gheorghiu–Belyavsky
Moscow 1982
Fianchetto System

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**b5**
4	**cxb5**	**a6**
5	**bxa6**	**♗xa6**

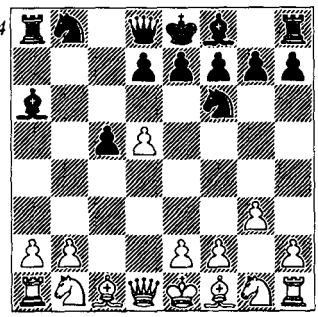
As we will see in the present game, this natural move permits White to implement a very specific plan based on the fianchetto of both bishops, the development of the KN on h3, and the bishop manoeuvre ♗b2–c3. The precise move order is as follows: 6 g3 g6

7 ♗g2 (threatening d6) 7 ... d6 8 b3 and White is able to oppose bishops on the a1–h8 diagonal. Since this variation has proved rather awkward to meet, Black has also tried avoiding it by changing move order: 5 ... g6 (on 5 ... d6 White can play 6 e4 without losing his right to castle, 6 ... ♘xe4?? of course losing to 7 ♕a4+) 6 g3 (on 6 b3 Black can continue 6 ... ♗g7 7 ♗b2 ♘xa6 crossing White's plans in view of the threatened ... ♘b4) 6 ... ♗g7 7 ♗g2 (the interesting attempt to punish Black's move order by 7 d6 is well answered by 7 ... ♖xa6! 8 dxe7 ♕xe7 9 ♗g2 d5 with obvious compensation) 7 ... d6 8 ♘h3 ♗xa6 and Black has prevented White's intended QB manoeuvre.

Another option afforded by Black's move order is the possibility of capturing on a6 with the knight, e.g. 5 ... g6 6 g3 ♗g7 7 ♗g2 d6 8 ♘h3 ♘xa6!? 9 0-0 ♕b6 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♘f4 ♘g4 (not 11 ... ♘d7? permitting the typical pseudo-sacrifice 12 ♘e6! with advantage) 12 h4 ♗d7 13 ♘e4 (intending h5) 13 ... ♖fb8 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

6 g3 *(184)*

White has two basic methods of interpreting the Fianchetto System according to whether the KN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is developed on f3 or h3. The latter development occurs in the game and we shall examine the strategic implications of this choice further on. With the knight on f3, we may observe that the protection of the d-pawn is carried out by the QN, the queen, and the KB. The KB's action, however, is veiled by the KN and thus White may make the manoeuvre ♘f3–d2–f1(–e3) if necessary. For Black's part, he will increase the pressure against d5 with the typical manoeuvre ... ♘b8–d7–b6, coupled with the transfer of the queen to the a8–h1 diagonal (... ♖a7 and ... ♕a8 or ... ♕c7–b7), and/or ... ♗c4 at the right moment.

Let's see some concrete examples. 6 ... g6 7 ♗g2 d6 8 ♘f3 ♗g7 9 ♘c3 ♘bd7 (other move orders are possible of course) 10 0-0 and now:

(1) 10 ... 0-0 11 ♕c2 with the further divergence:

(1a) 11 ... ♖a7 12 ♖d1 ♕a8 13 h3 (if 13 e4? ♘g4! and Black obtains control of d3 after ... ♘ge5 and ... c4) 13 ... ♗c4?! 14 a3! ♖b8 (on 14 ... ♘xd5?? 15 ♘d2 wins a piece; whilst if 14 ... ♗xd5? 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘d2! followed by ♘c4 regaining the pawn with a clear advantage) 15 ♘d2 ♗a6 16 b3 ♘e8 17 ♗b2 ♘c7 18 a4 ♕b7 19 ♖ab1 ♕c8 20 ♗a1 and White having untangled his queenside, has preferable chances.

(1b) 11 ... ♕b6 12 ♖b1 ♖fb8 13 b3 ♘e8 14 ♘d2 ♕a5 15 ♗b2 c4 16 ♖fc1 ♘e5 17 ♗a1 and again White stands well.

(1c) 11 ... ♕a5 12 ♗d2 ♖fb8 13 ♖fd1 ♘e8 14 ♗h3 ♗c8 15 ♗e1 and again, having unravelled his pieces with another typical manoeuvre, White has the edge.

(2) 10 ... ♘b6 (by putting pressure on d5 immediately Black reduces White's options) 11 ♖e1 0-0 and now:

(2a) 12 ♘d2 ♕c7 13 ♖b1 ♕b7! 14 b3 ♘fxd5 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘e4 (16 ♘f1? meets with a surprising refutation: 16 ... ♘c3! 17 ♗xb7 ♗xb7! 18 ♕d3 ♗e4 19 ♕e3 ♗d4 20 ♕h6 ♗xb1 21 a3 ♗a2 22 ♘d2 ♖fb8 with excellent chances for Black) 16 ... ♖ad8! 17 ♗b2 ♗xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♕b4 with approximately level prospects.

(2b) 12 ♗f4 ♘c4 (12 ... ♘h5!? is an important alternative, e.g. 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗d2 ♘c4 etc.) 13 ♕c1 ♕a5 (but here 13 ... ♘h5?! is not as good, e.g. 14 ♗h6 ♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 ♘xb2? 16 ♘g5 ♘f6 17 ♘ce4 etc.) 14 ♘d2 ♖fb8 15 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 16 ♗d2 with a slight advantage to White.

6 ... g6
7 ♗g2

When White develops the KN on h3 instead of f3 (as seen in the foregoing analyses), he basically has two fundamentally different plans available according to whether the manoeuvre ♘g1–h3–f4 is linked with a queenside fianchetto or attacking ideas based on advancing the h-pawn. Of course, there are various other possibilities and myriad variations thereafter; thus, here, we restrict ourselves to outlining the main alternatives to the fianchetto of the QB. After 7 ♘h3 d6 8 ♘c3 ♗g7 9 ♘f4 (Black must be careful how he meets the simple development 9 ♗g2 0-0 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 ♗g5 ♖b8 — 11 ... h6 seems more natural — 12 ♕d2 intending to meet 12 ... ♘b6 with 13 b3 c4 14 b4 with advantage, and 12 ... ♘e5 13 b3 c4 with 14 ♗h6! with some advantage) 9 ... ♘bd7 10 h4 h6 (10 ... 0-0 11 h5 ♘e5 12 hxg6 hxg6 White obtains real possibilities on the kingside) 11 ♕c2 ♘e5 12 ♗g2

0-0 13 0-0 ♖b8 with roughly balanced chances.

We note also that if White intends to employ the plan in the present game he may also play immediately 7 b3.

7	**...**	**d6**
8	**b3**	

Only now does White reveal that he intends to oppose bishops on the a1–h8 diagonal and forgo the natural development ♘c3. The c3 square, in fact, is earmarked for the QB in order to be able to meet a future ... c4 by b4. As we have already learnt, the d-pawn will be secured by means of the manoeuvre ♘g1–h3–f4.

8	**...**	**♗g7**
9	**♗b2**	**0-0**
10	**♘h3**	**♘bd7**
11	**0-0** *(185)*	

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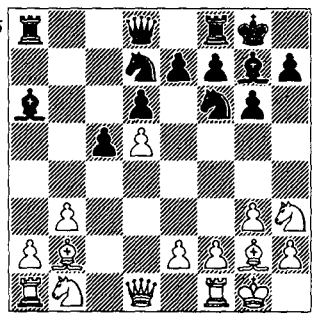

This is the critical position of the variation, where White is ready to complete his intended set-up by ♘f4 and ♗c3. If Black wants to activate his KN he is forced to accept the exchange of his KB which obviously reduces the potential dynamism of his position.

11	**...**	**♖a7**

The most logical reply. The absence of White's QN on c3 diminishes the protection of the pawns on d5 and a2 and Belyavsky therefore prepares to pressurize these points by playing ... ♕a8.

A typical error would be for Black to permit White to set up a queenside blockade, e.g. 11... ♖b8 12 ♗c3 (essential in order to take control of b4) 12 ... ♘e5 13 ♖e1 c4? 14 b4 and, essentially, from the positional point of view Black is lost, e.g. 14 ... ♘fg4 15 a4 e6 16 ♕d2 and with a subsequent ♘a3–c2 Black's fate would be sealed.

12	**♖e1**	

White now prepares to play e4, confident that any weakening of d3 can be sufficiently offset by means of ♘f4.

12	**...**	**♕a8**
13	**e4**	**♖b8**

Threatening ... c4.

14	**♗c3**	**♘e8**

Black has a more dynamic continuation available in 14 ... ♘e5!? 15 ♘f4 (after 15 ♗xe5?! dxe5

Black continues with ... ♘e8–d6 with fine chances; similarly, if 15 f4 ♘d3 16 ♖e3 c4 Black has the initiative) 15 ... ♗h6! and all of Black's pieces are very active and White's d3 is weak.

15	**♗xg7**	**♘xg7**
16	**♘d2**	**♘e5**
17	**♘f4**	

As in the game, Black would also have obtained sufficient compensation for the pawn after 17 f4 ♘d3 18 ♖e3 ♗b5! 19 a4 (or 19 ♗f1 ♘b4 20 ♗xb5 ♖xb5 21 a4 f5! and Black undermines d5) 19 ... ♗a6.

17	**...**	**♗b5!**

Provoking a weakening of the queenside pawns.

18	**a4**	

18 ♕c2? would be met by 18 ... g5 and ... ♘d3–b4.

18	**...**	**♗a6**

Obtaining the first tangible fruits of the plan initiated with the 11th and 12th moves: Black's threats have caused a permanent structural weakness on b3 and the problems with d3 remain to be solved.

19	**♘f3**	

Faced with the threat of ... ♖b4–d4 White decides at least to eliminate the pressure on d3, but now he becomes tied down to the protection of b3.

19	**...**	**♘xf3+**
20	**♕xf3**	**♖b4**
21	**h4**	**♖ab7**
22	**♖e3**	**♕b8**
23	**♖a3** *(186)*	

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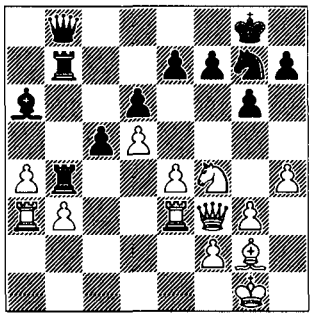


A very instructive moment. The chances of White converting his extra pawn are reduced to nothing and in fact he is now obliged to begin thinking in terms of how to save the game.

23	**...**	**♘e8**
24	**♗f1**	**♗xf1**
25	**♔xf1**	**♘f6**
26	**♔g2**	**h5**
27	**a5**	

With nothing else available, White plays his trump card in order to distract Black even at the cost of returning the extra pawn.

27	...	♘g4
28	♖c3	♖a7
29	♕e2	♕a8
30	♘d3	♖b8
31	f3	♖xa5
32	♖xa5	♕xa5
33	♖c4	♘f6
34	b4!	

Seizing a tactical opportunity to get rid of the structural weakness in the position.

34	...	cxb4
35	♕d2	♘d7
36	♖xb4	

White has defended himself as best he can, but the problems deriving from the somewhat exposed position of his king will endure even into an ending. With accurate defence White ought just to be able to hold the position, but in practice it is far from easy.

36	...	♖c8
37	♖b2	♕a4
38	♖a2	♕c4

Although the worst is over for White it is clear that Black's domination of the c-file still makes things rather awkward. If only White could get his knight to c6 there would be nothing left to fear and so, in time-trouble, White plays ...

39	♘b4?	

... but this is in fact a serious mistake, putting White in a critical position.

39	...	♖b8
40	♖b2	

Now it becomes clear that 40 ♘c6? would lose after 40 ... ♖b1. The best chance was 40 ♘d3, e.g. 40 ... ♖b3 41 ♘c1 ♖b1 42 ♖c2 ♕b5 43 ♕e2 ♕b6 44 ♖f2 ♘c5!, although here too it is clear that Black retains much the more active position.

40	...	♘e5
41	♘a2	♖xb2
42	♕xb2	♕d3
43	♕f2	♕a3!

With this move Black's dynamic advantage, patiently built up over the last twenty-odd moves, finally translates into material gain due to the threat of 44 ... ♘xf3.

44	f4	♘g4
45	♕d2?	

Losing quickly. White could have put up stiffer resistance by 45 ♕e2, although even here he would lose a pawn after 45 ... ♘f6 threatening ... ♘xe4.

45	...	♘e3+
46	♔f2	

Or 46 ♔g1 ♘c4 47 ♕f2 ♕d3

with a winning advantage, e.g. 48 ♕g2 ♘d2 etc.

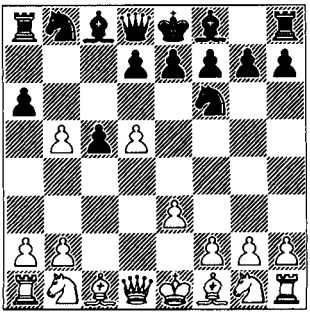
46	**...**	**♘c4**
47	**♕e2**	**♘b2!**
	0–1	

On 48 ♘c1 comes 48 ... ♕c5+ 49 ♕e3 ♕xc1!

5 The Modern Centre

Main Line: Modern Variation
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3 *(187)*.

187
B



Fundamentally similar strategic situations can arise in other variations, e.g. 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 and now:

Anti-Benko Variation

4 ♘f3 g6 5 ♕c2 ♗g7 6 e4 d6 7 cxb5

Other Variations

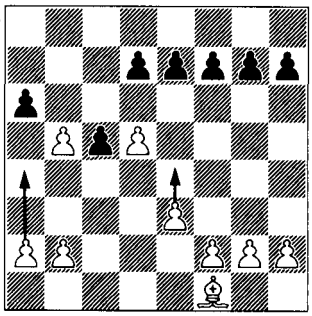
4 cxb5 a6 5 f3

The idea of postponing the capture on a6 is to make it less easy for the opponent to develop the queenside, and especially to avoid Black setting up favourable pressure on the a6–f1 diagonal.

1 Strategic Ideas

Put simply, White's idea here is to avoid any pressure on the a6–f1 diagonal in order to be able to develop his kingside naturally without losing the right to castle. The basic strategic situation which arises is as follows *(188)*.

188



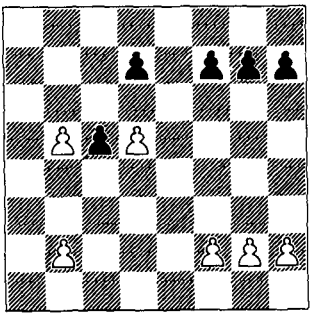
Having solved the most pressing problem by freeing the action of his KB on the f1–a6 diagonal, White intends to reinforce the b5 and d5 points by means of the advances a4 and e4 in order, with the former, to keep Black bottled up on the queenside, and with the latter to commence the natural plan of central expansion.

The ideas behind the stabilizing advances a4 and e4

The following explanations and examples will help us understand exactly what we mean by the term 'stabilizing'.

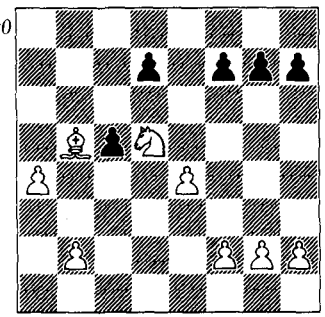
If we try to imagine that after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 Black proved unable to remove the pawn on b5 and/or d5, then it is easy to understand that his queenside pieces would have great difficulty in getting into play because the b5 pawn controls both a6 and c6 and the d-pawn blocks the a8–h1 diagonal. The long term idea behind White's stabilizing advances is to be able to recapture with a pawn in answer to the possible captures ... a6xb5 and ... e6xd5 so as to maintain the status quo *(189)*.

189



It is clear that White's plan requires a lot of preparation in order to achieve these results. However, given that Black is not always in a hurry to play either ... a6xb5 or ... e6xd5, the structure shown in the above diagram can actually arise in practice and is generally strategically favourable to White as long as the cramping effect of the pawns on b5 and d5 is more important than their weakness. One must not forget, however, that the moves a4 and e4 are useful even if White is obliged to recapture with a piece on b5 or d5, after ... a6xb5 and/or ... e6xd5 *(190)*.

190



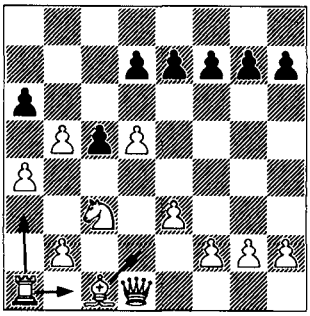
In this situation, the partnership a4–b5 is useful for blocking Black's thematic pressure on the a- and b-files, whilst the corresponding e4–d5 duo keeps Black's central pawns under lock and key.

Of the two 'partnerships' noted above, only that on a4–b5 occurs in practice with any frequency as Black is nearly always in a position to prevent the second.

White's undefended QR

Once e4 has been played, the d-pawn is well and truly supported without any problem, whereas White's undefended QR can prove a handicap and provide Black with a pin on the a-file when White plays a4. This problem can be dealt with either by defending the rook or moving it off the file *(191)*.

191



Normally White would like to be able to answer ... axb5 with axb5 in order to be able to establish a queenside pawn structure of the type shown in diagram 189 rather than that shown in diagram 190. It should be noted that the move ♖a3 is particularly well suited for solidifying the queenside (even the a4–b5 partnership shown in diagram 190 is reinforced if White's QR is protected), and/or entering the game via the third rank, in which case Black is likely to find a possible ... axb5 answered by ♘xb5.

Black's plans

Black essentially has three ways of countering White's idea of stabilization, the extremes of which are diametrically opposed:

Plan 1: To allow White to play both stabilizing advances.

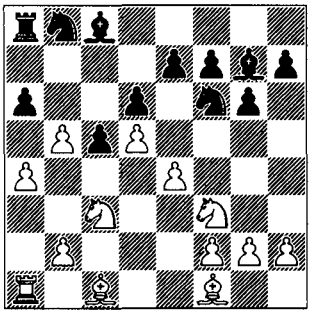
Plan 2: To allow White to play a4 but prevent e4 by means of rapid central counterplay with ... e6.

Plan 3: To play ... axb5 before White plays a4 at the same time reserving the possibility of countering in the centre with ... e6.

Plan 1: White plays both stabilizing advances

When Black allows White to play both stabilizing advances, he develops his kingside (... g6, ... ♗g7, ... 0-0) in conjunction with ... d6 to hold up the further advance of White's e-pawn *(192)*.

192



In the kind of situation shown in the diagram, Black can solve

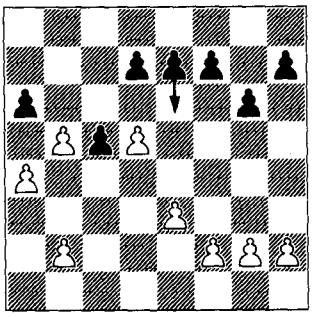
the problem of the mobilization of his queenside by the capture ... axb5 followed, for example, by ... ♗a6 and ... ♘bd7, or by ... ♘a6–b4 and ... ♗a6. Black can also try to remove White's blockade on b5 with manoeuvres like ... ♘e8–c7 or ... ♘a6–c7 together with ... ♗a6.

Black should also keep an eye on the possibility of a central break with ... e6 especially when there is sufficient pressure on d5 to oblige White to play dxe6 and after recapturing to follow up with ... d5. It should be noted that if Black has recaptured on e6 by ... fxe6 he must be on his guard against a possible e5 advance which would destroy his plans.

Plan 2: White plays a4, Black counters with ... e6

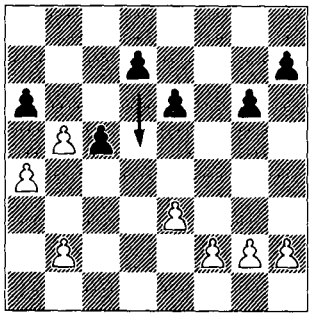
Black's plan here is to allow White to play a4 and then counter rapidly in the centre with ... e6 *(193)*.

193



In this type of situation Black's main aim, generally speaking, is to remove the pawn on d5 so as to make subsequent occupation of the centre by ... d5 possible. The ideal for Black would be to force White to play dxe6, recapture with ... fxe6, and be able to follow up with ... d5 thus obtaining ample positional compensation for the pawn *(194)*.

194



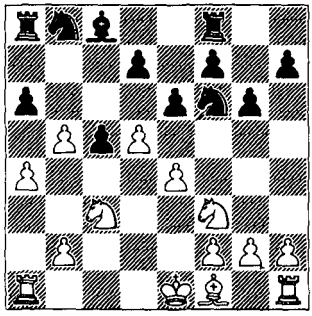
Basically, White has two different methods of countering this type of plan: to defend the pawn on d5 (with a further divergence according to whether White does so by e4 or ♗c4), or to exchange the d-pawn by dxe6 and then seek to prevent ... d5.

White plays e4 and Black opens the e-file

As previously noted, from the conceptual point of view the best way of neutralizing Black's central ... e6 break is to support the pawn

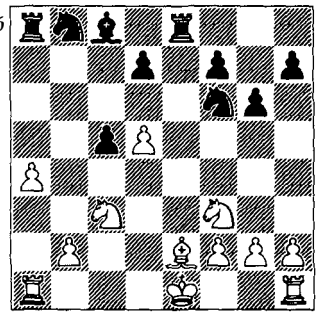
on d5 with the stabilizing advance e4. However, White has bought the stabilization of the queenside at the cost of time (e3, ♘c3, a4) and the detriment of his kingside development *(195)*.

195



In this type of position White has some difficulty in developing his kingside. He is reluctant to simply play ♗e2 because this would cost him time and also allow Black to take control of the e-file with gain of tempo after ... axb5, ♗xb5 exd5, exd5 ♖e8+, ♗e2 *(196)*.

196

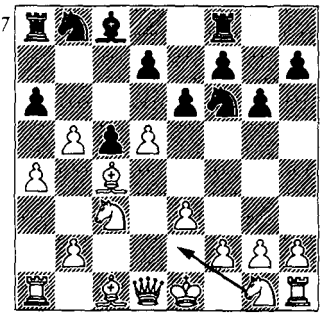


It should also be noted that in this kind of position the pawn on d5 can easily become more of a weakness than a strength as Black has no difficulty in developing his queenside and attacking d5, e.g. ... ♗c8–b7, ... d6, and ... ♘b8–d7–b6.

White plays ♗c4

White can also protect his d-pawn by playing ♗c4 instead of e4 *(197)*.

197



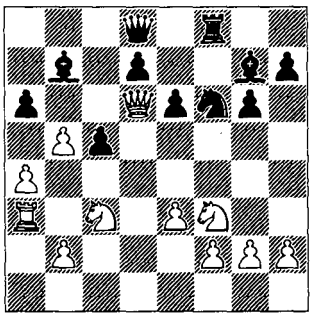
White generally links this development with the placing of the KN on e2 where it is useful both for covering the e-file (should White play e4 at some stage) and for possibly reinforcing a piece on d5. Naturally, Black cannot wait too long before making the captures ... axb5 and ... exd5, and although White will generally be able to maintain a blockade on one of the two white squares (b5 and d5) the active development of

Black's queenside pieces will still guarantee him dynamic compensation.

The exchange dxe6 and the blockading move ♕d6

White has also sought to scotch the opponent's plans by means of the capture dxe6 followed by ♕d6, blockading the advance of Black's d-pawn *(198)*.

198



This blockading idea crops up in various positions. The above diagram is of course merely schematic and seeks to show the most typical dynamic elements following the implementation of this plan.

The first point to observe here is that the ♕d6 attacks the pawn on c5. This can only be defended by ... ♕c8 when Black has already developed his QB. Alternatively, if White has played the thematic ♖a3, then Black has an indirect defence available in ... ♖e8 setting up the skewer ... ♗f8 if White captures c5. This defence, however, rarely discourages the capture of the c-pawn because the weakening of Black's kingside following the loss of his black-squared bishop, plus the fact that White has gained a second pawn, clearly offers White good chances. Finally, we note that Black has possibilities of counter-attack against f3 by means of ... ♘e8 or ... ♘e4, ♘xe4 ♗xe4.

It is clear that the success of White's plan depends on how long he can keep up the blockade and/or the price Black has to pay to get rid of the queen.

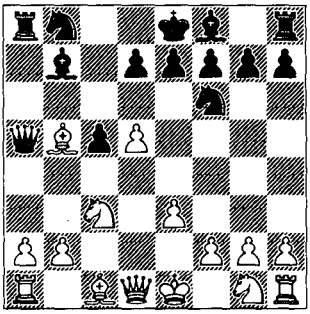
Plan 3: Black plays ... axb5 before a4

This third plan (again with reference to diagram 188) is the most radical way of preventing White's stabilization strategy. Black's idea is to dispense with the moves ... g6 and ... ♗g7 and use the time saved to eradicate White's pawns on b5 and d5. With this type of plan, where time is of the essence and forcing moves are the norm, it is impractical to consider themes out of context and we need to examine the actual variation.

The plan under discussion is introduced by the moves 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3

axb5 6 ♗xb5 ♕a5+ 7 ♘c3 ♗b7 *(199)*.

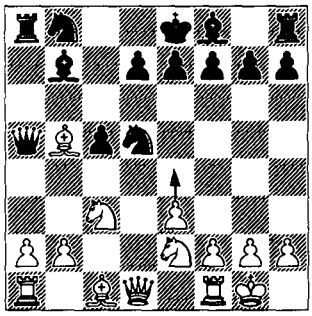
199



White has two fundamentally different ways of dealing with the threat to his d-pawn: either to try and conserve his material advantage, or to return the pawn in order to gain an advantage in development.

If White wants to try to hold on to his pawn then he is obliged to play 8 ♗d2 which leads him inexorably into a forced variation of great complexity which is examined in detail below (see Game 14). The alternative idea of returning the pawn can occur at various stages after the same introductory move 8 ♗d2, but is perhaps seen in its clearest form after 8 ♘e2. As well as gaining an advantage in development White hopes to be able to play e4, e.g. 8 ... ♘xd5 (the basic strategy remains the same after the alternative 8 ... ♗xd5) 9 0-0 *(200)*.

200



The attack on d5, activated by castling, gains White even more time. The planned e4 advance is useful not only for developing the QB but also for restraining the enemy centre. It is worth mentioning that if Black tries to prevent e4 White can sometimes play it anyway, continuing the basic idea of trading material for time, and going for the jugular. These ideas are illustrated in the analyses to be found in game 14.

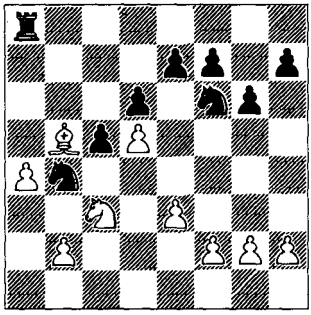
2 Tactical Ideas

Despite, or perhaps because, of the fact that the Modern type of centre is tactically very rich, it is difficult to identify many recurring tactical themes. This is because the fluidity of the centre naturally tends to produce specific and particular tactics in very diverse situations. Only the examples below occur with some frequency and in various positions.

Indirect defence of the d5 pawn

The following type of position can easily arise *(201)*.

201



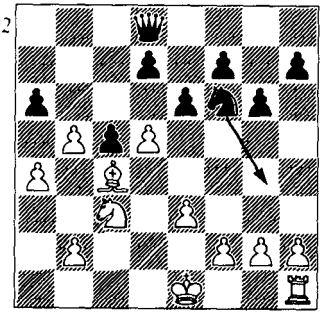
Although this theme is very simple it is worth pointing out because of the very natural placing of both sides' pieces. Black cannot capture on d5 because after ... ♘fxd5, ♘xd5 ♘xd5 White wins material by means of the double attack ♗c6.

The exposed position of the ♗c4

When White places his KB on c4 in order to protect the d-pawn it may become vulnerable to the following type of tactical ideas *(202)*.

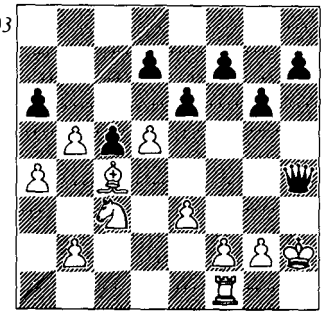
Here Black can play ... ♘g4 which in addition to the simple possibility of continuing with ... ♘e5 also creates tactical threats against the unprotected bishop.

202



Black now threatens to play ... ♘xf2, ♔xf2 ♕h4+ and White cannot avoid the danger by means of the natural 0-0 because of the other capture ... ♘xh2, ♔xh2 ♕h4+ *(203)*.

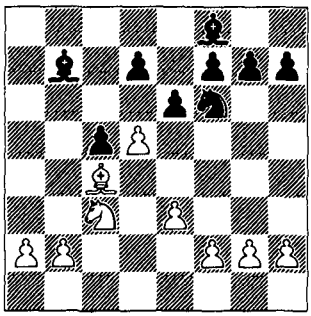
203



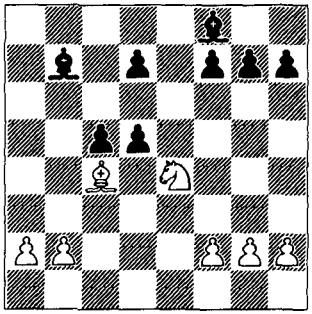
In other circumstances the bishop may be exposed to a fork *(204)*.

Here, for example, White may try to support d5 by means of the advance e4, but Black has the riposte... ♘xe4!, ♘xe4 exd5 *(205)* ... regaining the piece and re-establishing material parity.

204



205



3 Illustrative Games

Game 13
Torre–Vaganian
London 1984
Modern Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**b5**
4	**cxb5**	**a6**
5	**e3**	

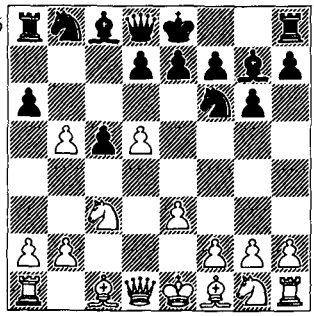
Much the most important alternative to the standard continuation 5 bxa6 which we considered in the preceding chapter. White's other fifth move possibilities are examined in Game 14.

5 ... g6

5 ... axb5 will also be analyzed in Game 14.

6 ♘c3 ♗g7 *(206)*

206
W



When Black develops his kingside first, as here, he gives White a wide choice of possibilities but at the same time reserves a flexibility for himself in being able to play setups with ... d6 or ... e6 according to circumstances.

7 ♘f3

The other possibilities are as follows:

(1) 7 e4 (the idea of this advance is to force Black to play ... d6 because of the threat of e5) 7 ... d6 (Black can also, in fact, ignore the threat by playing 7 ... 0-0, e.g. 8 a4 — after 8 e5 ♘e8 9 ♘f3 d6 10 ♗f4 ♗g4 the pressure on e5

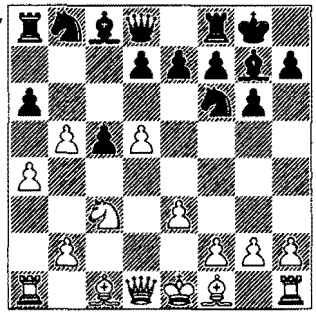
is too great — 8 ... ♗b7 9 e5 ♘e8 10 ♘f3 e5 11 ♗f4 dxe5 12 ♗xe5 ♘f6 with strong pressure against d5) 8 a4 0-0 9 ♘f3 axb5 10 ♗xb5 ♗a6 11 ♗d2 ♘e8 12 0-0 ♘c7 13 ♕e2 with an edge for White.

(2) 7 a4 (this move can either transpose back into the game continuation after 7 ... 0-0 8 ♘f3 or develop independent significance with 8 ♗c4 followed by ♘ge2) 7 ... 0-0 8 ♗c4 e6 (White can meet 8 ... d6 with the interesting manoeuvre 9 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 10 ♖a3 ♘b6 11 ♗a2, e.g. 11 ... axb5 12 ♘xb5 ♗d7 13 ♘bc3 e6 14 dxe6 ♗xe6 15 ♘f4 ♗xa2 16 ♖xa2 ♕d7 17 0-0 ♖fd8 18 e4 ♕c6 19 ♖e1 with advantage) 9 ♘ge2 axb5, and after either 10 ♘xb5 exd5 11 ♗xd5 or 10 ♗xb5 exd5 11 ♘xd5 Black will try to remove the blockade on b5 and d5.

(3) 7 bxa6 0-0 8 ♘f3 d6 9 ♗e2 ♗xa6 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 12 ♕e2 ♕a8 with typical compensation for the pawn.

7 ... 0-0
8 a4 *(207)*

The exact moment when Black should play ... axb5 is a characteristic problem of many of the variations examined in this chapter. On the one hand, he would rather not capture until White has moved his KB, but on the other, he must pay attention


207
B

to the fact that if White protects the rook or moves it off the a-file he will be able to recapture on b5 with the pawn thus making the development of Black's queenside rather difficult.

The relative value of these options depends on various factors and makes a comparative assessment well nigh impossible. As a very general guide, however, we would say that Black can consider it a success if he can delay this capture until White has moved his KB (even if White recaptures with his QN) as long as White cannot recapture with the a-pawn.

In the above diagram Black must decide whether to choose a set-up with ... d6 or ... e6. In the first case the game assumes a manoeuvring, positional character, whereas in the second it becomes tactical and dynamic.

We shall take a look here at some examples of the first possi-

bility as the second occurs in the game: 8 ... d6 9 ♖a3 (even though this move defends the rook, White does not intend answering 9 ... axb5 with 10 axb5 since after 10 ... ♖xa3 11 bxa3 ♕a5 he would be forced to play 12 ♗d2 thus giving back the pawn on a3) 9 ... axb5 (9 ... ♘bd7 10 e4 axb5 11 ♗xb5 ♗a6 12 ♕e2 ♗xb5 13 ♘xb5 ♘e8 14 0-0 ♘c7 15 b3 leaves White some advantage) 10 ♗xb5 ♘a6 11 0-0 ♘b4 12 ♘d2 ♗b7 (not 12 ... ♘fxd5? 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗c6 etc.) 13 e4 e6 14 dxe6 fxe6 and it is debatable whether Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

8 ... e6

It is more usual to preface this move with 8 ... ♗b7 which may simply transpose but can also lead to totally independent paths. For example:

(1) 9 e4?! (this move does not appear to be satisfactory here) 9 ... e6 10 ♖b1 exd5 11 exd5 axb5 12 axb5 d6 13 ♗c4 ♖e8+ 14 ♔f1 ♘bd7 15 h3 ♘b6 16 b3 ♖a7 17 ♗b2 ♕a8 and Black regains the pawn with a superior position.

(2) 9 bxa6 ♘xa6 10 ♘c4 e6 11 0-0 ♘b4 12 e4 (having stabilized the central position White stands better) 12 ... exd5 (not 12 ... ♘xe4? 13 ♘xe4 exd5 14 ♘d6) 13 exd5 ♗a6 14 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 15 ♗e3 d6 16 ♕d2 ♕a8 17 ♖ad1 with advantage.

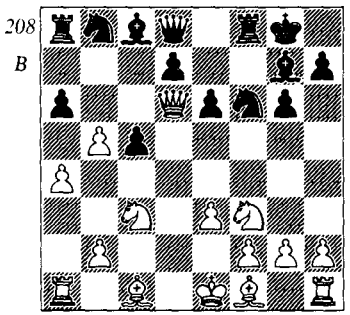
(3) 9 ♗c4 ♘e8 (9 ... e6 10 bxa6 ♗xd5 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 13 ♕xd5 ♘xa6 14 0-0 ♕e7 15 e4 ♖fe8 16 e5 leaves White somewhat better) 10 bxa6 ♘xa6 11 0-0 ♘d6 12 ♗e2 f5 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

(4) 9 ♖b1 e6 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 ♗e2 axb5 12 axb5 d5 13 0-0 ♘bd7 14 b4 c4 15 ♘d4 ♕e7 16 e4! ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♘c6 ♗xc6 19 bxc6 ♘e5 20 ♕c2 and White stands better.

(5) 9 ♖a3 e6 10 d6 ♘d5! 11 ♘e4 axb5 12 ♘xc5 b4 13 ♖d3 ♗c6 with chances for both sides in a complicated position.

The reader must not forget that these lines are essentially illustrative and that — especially in such dynamic variations — it is always possible for improvements to be discovered by both sides.

9 dxe6 fxe6
10 ♕d6 *(208)*



By blocking the enemy d-pawn in this way White prevents Black obtaining control of the centre. The presence of the white queen is particularly awkward for Black as he can only get rid of it by playing his KN or KB backward. In addition, the attack on the c-pawn complicates things even more.

10 ... ♗b7
11 ♗e2

A quiet move which allows Black to capture on b5 with a typical gain of tempo. The following lines are more combative but also riskier:

(1) 11 ♕xc5 ♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♕b4 ♗b7 (not 13 ... ♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♖xf3? 15 ♗g2) 14 bxa6 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘xa6 16 ♕d6 with balanced chances.

(2) 11 ♖a3 axb5 (three other possibilities: 11 ... ♖e8 12 ♕xc5! ♗f8 13 ♕d4 ♗xa3 14 bxa3 and thanks to his bishops and attacking chances White's prospects are preferable; 11 ... ♘e4 12 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♗d3! is good for White; 11 ... ♕c8 12 ♗e2 ♘e8 13 ♕g3 d5 14 0-0 ♘f6 15 ♕h3! intending to continue with ♘g5 and ♗g4 with advantage) 12 ♗xb5 ♕c8 (another possibility is 12 ... ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 14 0-0 ♖f5 15 ♖d1 ♕f6) 13 0-0 ♘e8 14 ♕g3 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 d5 16 ♗e2 ♘c6 17 f4 ♘d6 and Black has similar compensation to that in the game.

11 ... axb5
12 ♗xb5 ♕c8
13 0-0 ♘e8
14 ♕g3 ♗xf3
15 gxf3 d5

Black has improved his position by getting rid of the white queen and obtaining control of the centre without excessive simplification.

16 e4!

White must undertake some positive action as otherwise Black will be able to mass his pieces at leisure.

16 ... ♘c6

After 16 ... d4 17 ♘e2 Black is obliged to accept a weakening of his white squares since, for example, 17 ... c4?! runs up against 18 e5 and now 18 ... ♖f5? 19 ♘xd4 ♗xe5 20 ♘xf5 would win for White.

17 exd5 ♘d4
18 ♗e3!

White wisely completes his development and keeps the h1–a8 diagonal closed. The attempt to get more, for example by 18 d6? ♕b7!, would be very dangerous for White.

18 ... ♘f5

After 18 ... ♘xf3+ 19 ♔h1 White has the advantage.

19 ♕g4 ♗xc3

The only way to regain the d-pawn.

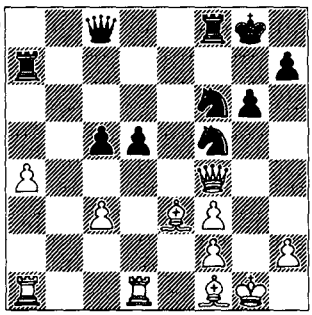
20 bxc3 exd5
21 ♖fd1

White has managed to weaken the opponent's pawn centre whilst maintaining both his extra pawn and the bishop pair but his pawns are very weak. All in all, these factors leave the position substantially equal.

21 ... ♘f6
22 ♕f4 ♖a7!

A cunning little move setting a big trap which White fails to perceive.

23 ♗f1?? *(209)*



How often we see a player thread his way successfully through a minefield of complexities, only to throw away the fruits of all his hard work with one lapse of concentration! Here White is too absorbed in his own idea of playing ♗h3 and misses the ulterior motive of Black's last move. The prophylactic 23 ♔h1 would have left chances for both sides.

23 ... g5!

Trapping the white queen in a fatal net.

24 ♕e5 ♖e7
25 ♖xd5 ♖xe5
26 ♖xe5

Although the remainder is merely a question of technique, Black does well not to consider his task to be a simple formality. Due attention is still necessary to win.

26 ... ♘d7
27 ♗c4+ ♔g7
28 ♗e6 ♘xe5!

Simplification is the safest way.

29 ♗xc8 ♘xf3+
30 ♔g2 ♘xe3+
31 fxe3 ♘h4+
32 ♔g1

If 32 ♔g3 ♖f3+ 33 ♔g4 ♔g6 followed by mate.

32	...	♖xc8
33	a5	♔f6
34	♔f2	♔e5
35	c4	♖a8
36	a6	♘f5
37	a7	♘d6
38	♖a5	♘e4+
39	♔f3	h5

While the rooks cancel each other out on one side of the board, Black has no trouble converting his advantage on the other.

40	h3	♔f5
41	♔g2	g4
42	hxg4	hxg4
43	♖a6	♔e5
44	♔h2	♘d6
45	♖c6	♘b7
46	♖c7	

White gives up his a-pawn and for a few more moves pursues the forlorn hope of reaching a drawn endgame of king, rook and knight against king and rook.

46	...	♖xa7
47	♔g3	♔d6
48	♖g7	♔c6
49	♔f4	♖a8
50	♖g6+	♘d6
51	e4	♖f8+
52	♔xg4	♔d7
53	♖g5	♘xe4
54	♖e5	♖e8

0–1

Game 14

Plaskett–Barlov

Bor 1985

Modern Variation

1	d4	♘f6
2	c4	c5
3	d5	b5
4	cxb5	a6
5	e3	

Other less well-trodden paths are:

(1) 5 f3 (with the idea of playing e4 without losing a tempo) 5 ... e6 (after 5 ... axb5?! there would follow 6 e4 with the twofold threat of ♗xb5 and e5) 6 e4 exd5 (also possible is 6 ... ♗b7, e.g.: 7 ♘c3 exd5 8 e5!? ♘h5 9 ♘xd5 ♕h4+ 10 g3 ♘xg3 11 hxg3 ♕xg3+ 12 ♔e2 ♕xe5+ 13 ♘e3 axb5 with a sharp position) 7 exd5 (or 7 e5 ♕e7 8 ♕e2 ♘g8 9 ♘c3 ♗b7 10 ♘h3 ♕d8! 11 ♘f4 ♘e7 with a complex position) 7 ... ♕e7+?! 8 ♔f2 c4 9 ♘c3 axb5 10 ♗e3 with the idea of continuing with ♕d2 and ♖e1, with advantage to White.

(2) 5 ♘c3 (here too the idea is to play e4 in one tempo only, but if he does not want to lose control of the diagonal f1–a6, White has no choice but to return the pawn forthwith) 5 ... axb5 (5 ... ♕a5!? deserves attention, e.g.: 6 ♗d2 axb5 7 e4 b4 8 e5 bxc3 9 ♗xc3 ♕a4 10 ♕xa4 ♖xa4 11 exf6 gxf6 with chances for both sides) 6 e4

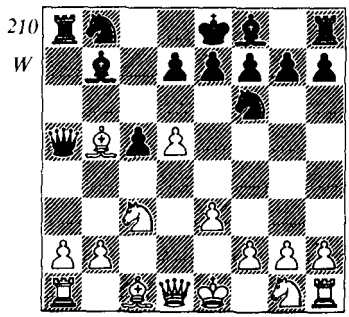
(if 6 ♘xb5 ♕a5+ 7 ♘c3 ♗a6 with adequate compensation for the pawn) 6 ... b4 7 ♘b5 d6 (if 7 ... ♘xe4? 8 ♕e2 with a decisive advantage thanks to the threat of smothered mate on d6) 8 ♗f4 ♘bd7 (the game can take an even sharper tactical turn after 8 ... g5!?, e.g. 9 ♗xg5 ♘xe4 10 ♗f4 ♕a5 11 ♗c4 ♗g7 12 ♕e2 b3+ 13 ♔f1 f5 with obscure play) 9 ♘f3 ♗a6 10 e5 ♕a5 11 a4 ♘h5 12 ♗g5 h6 with an extremely complex position.

(3) 5 b6 (here the idea is to return the pawn so as to attract the black queen to a square exposed to the manoeuvre ♘g1–f3–d2–c4) 5 ... ♕xb6 (5 ... d6 is of course possible, intending to follow up with ... ♘bd7xb6. Black has also tried 5 ... e6!?, e.g.: 6 ♘c3 ♕xb6 7 e4 ♗b7 8 ♘f3 g6 9 ♗.c4 ♗.g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗b3 — preparing ♘f3–d2–c4 — 11 ... ♕c7 12 ♘d2 a5 13 a3 — if 13 ♘c4? ♘xe4 — 13 ... c4! 14 ♗.xc4 ♘xe4 and, by simplifying the centre, Black attains a substantially balanced position) 6 ♘c3 d6 7 ♘f3 g6 8 ♘d2 ♗g7 9 e4 0-0 10 ♘c4 ♕c7 11 a4 ♘bd7 12 ♗e2 ♘b6 13 ♘a3 ♗b7 14 0-0 e6 15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♘c4 exd5 with a position where the rough parity derives from mutual structural weaknesses.

5 ... axb5

This move anticipates the stabilizing a4 and impresses a forcing character on the game.

6 ♗xb5 ♕a5+
7 ♘c3 ♗b7 *(210)*



If White now decides to defend his d5 pawn then play is practically forced along the line we will see in the game. The alternative, here as in later moves, is to return the material in order to achieve an advantage in development. For this purpose the most thoroughly investigated line is 8 ♘e2 with the following possible developments:

(1) 8 ... e6 9 0-0! exd5 10 ♕b3 ♗c6 11 ♗xc6 dxc6 12 e4! where White has a clear advantage.

(2) 8 ... ♘xd5 9 0-0 ♘xc3 (White realizes his idea in the event of both 9 ... ♘c7 10 ♗c4 ♗a6 11 ♗xa6 ♕xa6 12 e4 e6 13 ♗f4 d6 14 a4! with the idea of ♘b5, and in that of 9 ... ♘f6 10 e4! ♘xe4 11

♗f4 with some advantage in both cases) 10 ♘xc3 e6 (or 10 ... g6 11 e4 ♗g7 12 a4 0-0 13 ♗g5 e6 14 ♕d6 with a slightly superior position) 11 e4 ♗e7 12 a4 0-0 13 ♗f4 d6 14 ♗xd6 ♖d8 15 e5 (one rather swashbuckling idea is 15 ♗xe7 ♖xd1 16 ♖fxd1 ♘a6 17 ♖d7 with sufficient compensation for the queen) 15 ... ♗xd6 16 exd6 ♕b6 with equality.

(3) 8 ... ♗xd5 9 0-0 ♗c6 10 a4 e6 (after 10 ... g6 then 11 e4!? is interesting with the idea of meeting 11 ... ♘xe4 with 12 ♘xe4 followed by the manoeuvre ♗d2–c3) 11 ♘g3 ♗e7 12 e4 0-0 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♗d2 ♕c7 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗c3 with White rather better.

8 ♗d2

This position can also crop up by inversion of moves if Black adopts the continuation 5 ... ♗b7 6 ♘c3 ♕a5 7 ♗d2 axb5 8 ♗xb5; however in this case White can deviate from the text by playing 7 bxa6, e.g.: 7 ... ♗xd5 (if 7 ... ♗xa6 8 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 9 ♘ge2 with a sound position) 8 ♗d2 ♗c6 9 ♘f3 ♕c7 (if 9 ... ♘xa6?! 10 ♘e5 ♗b7? 11 ♕b3 and wins) 10 ♘b5 ♗xb5 11 ♗xb5 ♘xa6 12 a4 and White is slightly preferable.

8 ... ♕b6

Once again attacking the d5 pawn.

9 ♕b3

Here too, as at the previous move, White can return the pawn with the intention of gaining an advantage in development, e.g.:

(1) 9 ♘f3!? ♘xd5 10 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 11 a4 ♕g6 12 0-0 e6 13 ♗c3 ♗e7 with a balanced game.

(2) 9 ♗c4 e6 10 e4 (for 10 ♕b3 see the note to White's 10th move of the present game) 10 ... ♘xe4 11 ♘f3 (Black stands better after 11 ♘xe4 exd5) 11 ... ♘f6 12 0-0 exd5 13 ♖e1+ ♗e7 14 ♗b3 c4 15 ♗c2 ♘c6 16 ♗g5 0-0 with chances for both sides.

(3) 9 ♘ge2 ♘xd5 10 0-0 ♘c7 11 a4 ♘xb5 (if 11 ... e6? 12 a5 and 12 ... ♖xa5? is ruled out by 13 ♖xa5 ♕xa5 14 ♘d5 and wins) 12 ♘xb5 e6 13 e4 ♗e7 14 ♗f4 0-0 15 ♘ec3 ♕c6 16 ♘d6 and White is preferable.

9 ... e6

As the d5 pawn continues to take a hammering, White has to keep deciding whether to defend it or give it back.

10 e4

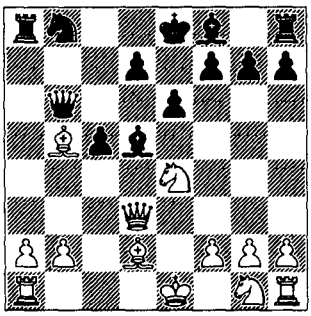
The commonest continuation, but here too White can return the pawn with 10 ♗c4, e.g.: 10 ... ♕xb3 11 ♗xb3 exd5 (perhaps 11 ... ♘a6 is strongest, with the idea of meeting 12 ♘f3 by 12 ... exd5

with advantage because White's KN cannot move to f4, and of meeting 12 ♘ge2 by 12 ... ♘b4 13 dxe6 ♘d3+ 14 ♔f1 fxe6 with compensation for the pawn) 12 ♘ge2 ♘a6 13 0-0 ♗e7 14 ♖fd1 0-0 15 ♗e1 with chances for both sides.

10 ... ♘xe4

The sacrifice that is typical of this line born of the fact that Black cannot allow his opponent to occupy the centre without protest because his position would then inexorably become inferior.

11 ♘xe4 ♗xd5
12 ♕d3 *(211)*



The key position in this sharp variation. It is worth noting that Black cannot get his piece back immediately by 12 ... c4 13 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 14 ♕xc4 d5 because of the check on c8. It is obvious, however, that this latent tactical idea and the fact that he can immediately recover some material by 12 ... f5 followed by ... ♗xg2 guarantees him sufficient compensation for the piece.

12 ... f5

This is the most belligerent continuation, offering chances to both sides. Note that it looks hard for White to retain any advantage after 12 ... ♕b7 which paves the way for the tactical idea of the previous note, e.g.: 13 f3 c4 14 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 d5 16 ♕c2 dxe4 17 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 18 fxe4 ♘d7! 19 ♘e2 ♘c5 20 ♘c3 ♘d3+ 21 ♔e2 ♘xb2 22 ♘b5 ♖a4 23 ♘c3 ♖a8 with equality.

13 ♘g3 ♗xg2
14 ♘1e2

White has also tried 14 a4 with the idea of blocking the a- and b-files and possibly castling long, e.g.: 14 ... ♕b7 (or 14 ... ♗e7 15 ♘f3 ♗xh1 16 ♘xh1 ♗f6 17 ♘g3 0-0 18 ♔f1! d5 19 ♖e1 with advantage to White) 15 f3 ♗e7 16 ♘1e2 ♗xh1 17 ♘xh1 0-0 18 0-0-0 ♘c6 19 ♔b1 ♘e5 20 ♕e3 ♘xf3 21 ♗c3 ♗g5 22 ♕xc5 ♕e4+ 23 ♔a2! ♗e3! (if 23 ... ♖xa4+? 24 ♔b3 ♖b8 25 ♖xd7 and wins) with an extremely complex position.

14 ... ♗xh1

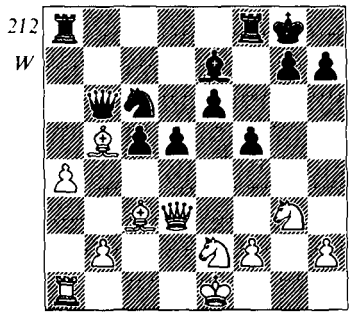
15 ♘xh1 ♗e7
16 ♘hg3

After 16 ♗c3 0-0 the position is a difficult one and offers mutual chances, but White must avoid the trap 17 ♗xd7? because of 17 ... ♖d8 18 ♕g3 ♗f8 and Black wins the bishop.

16 ... 0-0
17 a4

Or 17 ♘h5, e.g.: 17 ... ♘c6 18 ♗c3 ♖f7 19 ♘ef4 ♗f8 (after 19 ... d5 20 ♗xg7! ♖xg7 21 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♘xe6+ ♔f6 23 ♘f4 White is better) 20 a4 d5!? with chances for both players.

17 ... ♘c6
18 ♗c3 d5 *(212)*



Probably the soundest continuation for Black is 18 ... ♗f6, e.g.: 19 ♘h5 ♗xc3 20 ♕xc3 ♖f7 21 0-0-0 with a double-edged position. The text, however, offers a very good illustration of what can happen after the sacrifice on the 10th move in the way the central mass of black pawns threatens to strangle the action of White's minor pieces with the further advances ... d4 and ... e5.

19 ♕e3

Practically forced.

19 ... e5?!

With this pawn sacrifice, Black hopes to activate his rooks on the e-file. However, sounder was 19 ... ♘d8, e.g.: 20 ♗xg7?! ♔xg7 21 ♘h5+ ♔f7 (not 21 ... ♔h8 22 ♕e5+ ♗f6 23 ♘xf6 with a clear advantage, nor 21 ... ♔g6 22 ♕g3+ ♔xh5 23 ♕g7! with a violent attack compensating for the material sacrificed) 22 ♕h6 ♕xb5! (but not 22 ... ♖g8 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 24 ♕h6+ ♔f7 25 ♘ef4! with a decisive attack) and Black remains with a clear advantage.

20 ♗xe5 ♗g5
21 f4 ♖ae8

Threatening ... ♗xf4

22 ♗xc6 ♕xc6
23 ♖c1

After 23 fxg5 ♕e6 Black recovers his piece and the position is open to any result.

23 ... ♗e7

24	**b4!**	**♗d6**
25	**♖xc5!**	

White counts the exchange a small price to pay in order to maintain the linchpin of his position on e5. Black would become much more active after 25 bxc5 ♗xe5 26 fxe5 ♕xa4 with a complex position.

25	**...**	**♗xc5**
26	**♕xc5**	**♕xa4**

The exchange of queens would offer no hope for Black.

27	**♕xd5+**	**♔h8**
28	**♕d4**	**♖f7**
29	**♔f2**	**♕d7?**

Pressed for time, Black goes into an inexorably lost ending. He should have played 29 ... ♕c6 after which White, to continue the attack, would have had to resort to 30 ♘h5!? ♕h1 31 ♘eg3 ♕xh2+ 32 ♔f3, giving a position in which the last word remains to be said.

30	**♕xd7**	**♖xd7**
31	**♘xf5**	

It is now only a question of technique, as Black cannot play 31 ... ♖xe5 32 fxe5 ♖f7 owing to 33 ♘d4 g6 34 e6 and wins.

31	**...**	**♖b7**

Another error induced by time-trouble.

32	**♘d6**	**♖eb8**
33	**♘xb7**	**♖xb7**
34	**♗c3**	**♔g8**
35	**♘d4**	**♔f7**
36	**b5**	**♔e7**
37	**♗b4+**	**♔d7**
38	**♔e3**	

The king's intervention is decisive in supporting the progress of the b-pawn.

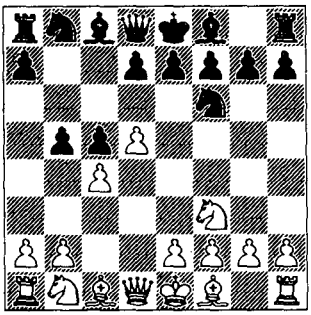
38	**...**	**♖b8**
39	**♔d3**	**g6**
40	**♗c5**	**♖a8**
41	**b6**	**♔c8**
42	**♔c4**	**♔b7**
43	**♔b5**	**♖a2**
44	**♘e6**	**♖b2+**
45	**♗b4**	**♔c8**
46	**♘c5**	

1–0

6 The Anti-Benko Centre

Main Line: Anti-Benko Variation
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 ♘f3 *(213)*.

213
B



In this chapter we will examine those variations where White refuses the gambit pawn without resolving the tension between the c4 and b5 pawns. Similar strategic positions may occur after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 and now:

Other Variations

4 ♕c2

4 a4

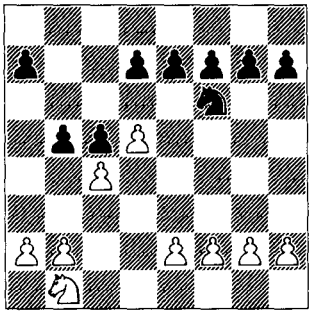
4 ♘d2

1 Strategic ideas

To focus clearly on the typical ideas behind this type of centre we should remember that after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5, White's most basic plan is to support the advance e4 by means of the natural development of his QN to c3. Refusal of the Benko Gambit, however, makes it impossible to follow this plan because Black can answer ♘c3 with ... b4, diverting the knight from its control over the e4 square. This, of course, does not happen when White accepts the gambit because the elimination of the b5 pawn allows the unmolested development of the ♘b1. When White declines the gambit a situation arises in which the development of the ♘b1 is to a large extent linked to the decision Black takes as regards his b5 pawn *(214)*.

As we have said, White cannot prepare the advance e4 by ♘c3 because of ... b4; on the other

214



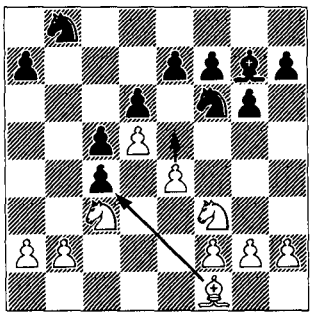
hand ♘b1–d2 is not ideal either because Black could reply with ... bxc4, trying to divert the knight from its control over e4 and having in any case diverted it from its best development square at c3. These quite straightforward considerations help us to understand the theme that typically underlies this type of centre: *White is disinclined to develop his QN until Black has taken a decision about his b5 pawn* (namely: on ... bxc4 the continuation might be ♘c3 but on ... b4, ♘d2 is necessary); *Black, for his part, wants to postpone taking a decision about his b5 pawn until White has developed his ♘b1* (so as to be able to answer ♘c3 with ... b4 and ♘d2 ... with bxc4).

These opposing interests may sort themselves out in the normal course of events in the sense that one of the two players might take a decision without waiting to see his opponent's intentions, or artificially, in the sense that one of the players might to force the other to announce his intentions first.

Black voluntarily plays ... bxc4

In this hypothesis, Black decides to play ... bxc4 when the white QN is still at b1 without being induced to do so by his opponent. In this case White can continue with his natural plan (♘c3 and e4), preparing to retake the c4 pawn with his KB and follow up with a rapid central breakthrough by e4–e5. To counter this plan, Black has to set up a pawn structure with ... d6 *(215)*.

215

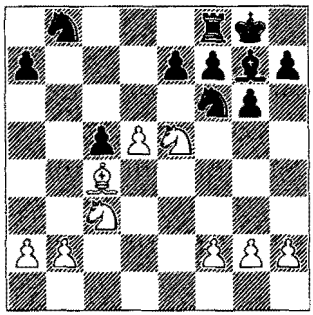


If White wants to gain a march on his opponent, he has to be quick about it for otherwise Black can hold up the e4–e5 advance by ... ♘bd7 and try to simplify the position by the manoeuvre ... ♘f6–g4–e5 or ... ♘d7–b6 followed by ... ♘f6–d7–e5, slowing the pace of the game to a more measured mood not conducive to

the exploitation of fast development.

When White carries out his plan of ♗f1xc4 and e4–e5 his opponent has to play ... dxe5 in order to prevent the further advance e5–e6. Even though Black is able to castle after the subsequent ♘xe5 *(216)* ...

216

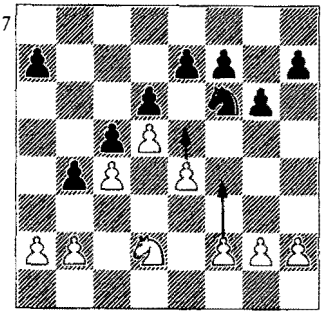


... White retains the possibility of violently opening up the diagonal a2–g8 by means of the sacrifice ♘xf7 followed by d6 as well as taking advantage of the support of the d5 pawn so as to occupy the advanced weak square c6. In such situations the game takes on a decidedly tactical hue and, although Black has everything he needs to defend, it is hard to deny White the advantage of the initiative.

Black voluntarily plays ... b4

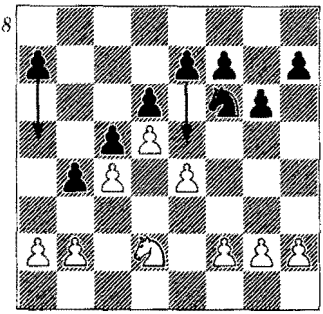
When, on the other hand, Black voluntarily plays ... b4, White can develop his QN to d2 and achieve the advance e4 *(217)*.

217



Generally speaking, white retains the idea of a central breakthrough by preparing the further advance e4–e5, while Black, as an alternative to the plan of a central break with ... e7–e6xd5, can look to implement a blockading strategy by making the advance ... e7–e5 when the time is ripe — namely when the reply d5xe6 need no longer be feared — and checking attempts at queenside breaks (e.g. a2–a3) with the prophylactic ... a7–a5 *(218)*.

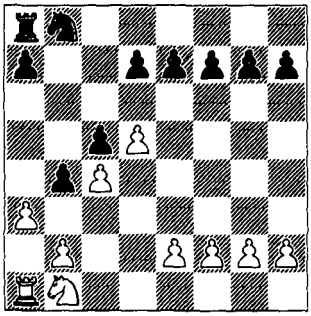
218



In such cases a situation arises in which Black can organize a kingside demonstration based on the advance ... f5, whereas White's attacking prospects on the queenside are considerably reduced.

If White wants to prevent the position in the diagram, he has to act quickly after ... b4 by breaking on the queenside with a2–a3 before Black has time to play the advance ... a7–a5 and when the ♖a8 is still undefended *(219)*.

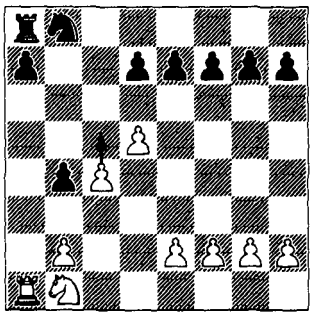
219



The important point is that after either ... bxa3, ♖xa3, or ... ♘a6, axb4 ♘xb4, White wins c3 for his QN. Further, the weakening of the a7 pawn is more serious than that of b2 as the latter can be defended by centralized minor pieces (e.g. a bishop on c3 or a knight on d3).

Otherwise, the idea is to free the c4 pawn through the exchange axb4 cxb4 so as to increase the dynamism of the central pawns *(220)*.

220



It is obvious that under such circumstances White is confronted with the possibility of a promising blockading plan involving ... d6 and ... ♘d7–c5, so he may decide to sacrifice his c-pawn by advancing it to c5 even after Black has played ... d6. In this event, after ... dxc5, White finds dynamic compensation in the freeing of his d- and e-pawns and in the clearance of the c4 square where he can actively place either his KB or QN.

It should be mentioned that the strategies shown in diagrams 217 and 219 are the extremes of White's possible reactions in the face of ... b4: in the first case he hopes to be able to converge his forces undisturbed on the kingside after blocking the queenside; in the second he takes immediate countermeasures to weaken the queenside blockade because he considers it a limitation on his chances. Obviously, in practice

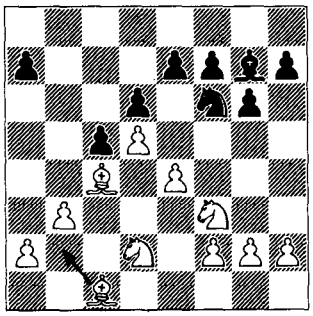
White can adopt a whole range of intermediate attitudes such as preparing to open up a queenside file with a2–a3 in a situation like the one shown in diagram 217, ready to act in this sector only if Black freezes the centre with ... e7–e5 at a moment when it is not convenient to reply with d5xe6.

White develops the QN voluntarily

This eventuality is very rare and we mention it not so much to note its existence as to underline the fact that it represents a strategic success for Black although, of course, far from a decisive one.

In the event of White playing ♘b1–d2, after ... bxc4 the ♘d2 has to stay where it is to act as a support for the advance e2–e4 and the recovery of the c4 pawn will be entrusted to the ♗f1. As for the QB, it has to be fianchettoed, so that we have a situation of the kind shown below *(221)*.

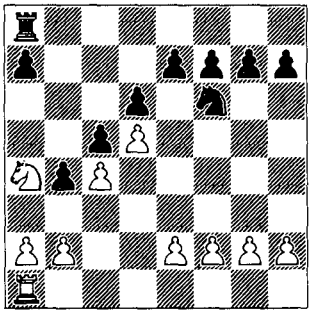
221



White's poorer piece coordination compared to diagram 215 (same situation but with the QN developed at c3) is fairly evident: here White's set-up is much less harmonious because the QN and QB do not occupy natural positions. A demonstration of this fact is that with the QB on b2 the e4–e5 advance can be refuted by Black by simply underlining the weakness of the long diagonal h8–a1 with the reply ... ♘f6–g4.

Alternatively, when White develops his QN voluntarily to c3, matters are even worse: after ... b4, the move ♘b5 would cost a piece through ... a6, so the knight has to be satisfied with decentralization on a4 *(222)*.

222



Here we need only make a quick comparison with diagrams 217 and 219 (same situation, but with the white QN on b1 or d2) to appreciate the tangible difference in favour of Black. It is not just

that White has not yet succeeded in achieving the advance e4, but he cannot even open up the way for the c4 pawn by a3 followed by axb4 because the interference of the ♘a4 on the a-file allows Black to answer a3 with ... a5.

Dealing with the tension between the b5 and c4 pawns

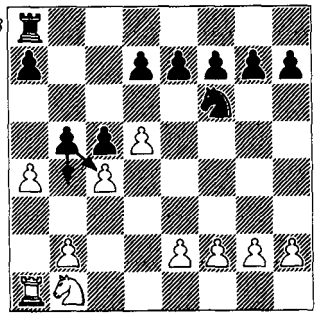
The foregoing observations have helped to explain why both sides have an interest in trying to force their opponent to act first concerning, respectively, the destiny of the b5 pawn and the development of the ♘b1. It should be understood that from Black's point of view the prolonging of the tension in a situation like the one shown in diagram 214 is in itself an advantage. The point is that if White fails to address the question of the ♘b1 then he will find it hard to pursue his development, whereas Black is less affected by the unresolved queenside confrontation and can carry serenely on with many useful moves (e.g. ... g6, ... d6, ... ♗g7, ... 0-0, ... ♗b7).

It is logical, therefore, that it should be White who should try to wriggle out of the impasse shown in diagram 214. He can do this in two ways: by attacking the b5 pawn directly, thus forcing Black to take a decision, or by organizing the e2–e4 advance with no support from his QN, thus pursuing his natural plan despite the presence of the black pawn on b5.

The a2–a4 advance

The most immediate, and by far the most common, method for assaulting the b5 pawn is by playing a4, after which Black can reply either with ... bxc4 or ... b4 *(223)*.

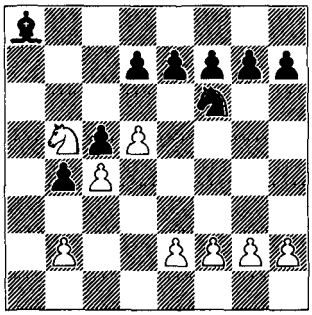
223



The results of these moves are shown in diagrams 215 and 217, with the difference that White has employed a tempo in advancing a2–a4. This difference makes it impossible to apply the strategies illustrated in diagrams 216 and 219, so White cannot force the pace in either case but has to play a manoeuvring game. This is the price that has to be paid for forcing Black to declare himself first.

Referring to the last diagram, it should be noticed that in lines in which the ♖a8 is defended (e.g. after ... ♗b7), Black can also try to maintain the status quo with ... a6, but in that case White can exchange pawns on the a-file and gain b5 for his QN. This is useful as after ... a6, axb5 axb5, ♖xa8 ♗xa8, ♘c3 b4, he is no longer forced to decentralize his knight unattractively to a4, but can play ♘b5 *(224)*.

224

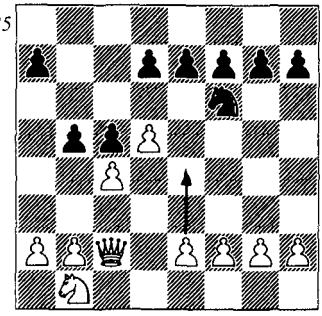


The white knight is deployed safely and, although its movements are limited, it can play a useful rôle in the pressure on the queenside that pivots around the conquest of the a-file.

Supporting e2–e4 without the QN

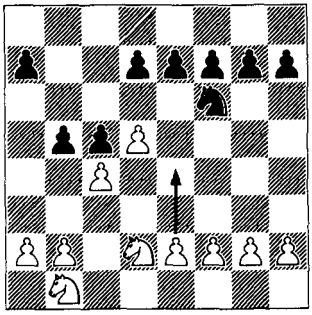
As we have said, White can also try to force his opponent's hand by going ahead with his natural plan of central expansion without support from the ♘b1. Specifically, he can prepare the advance e2–e4 by developing his queen to c2 *(225)* ...

225



... or by means of the manoeuvre ♘g1–f3–d2 *(226)*.

226



The idea is to embarrass his opponent: the advance ... b4 can give rise to situations of the kind shown in diagram 219, while the alternative ... bxc4 — above all in diagram 226 — would appear to suggest that White's stratagem is

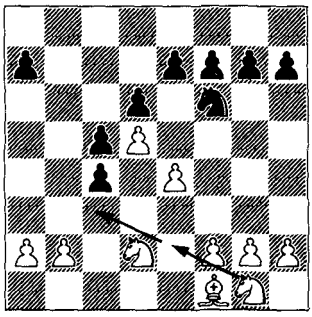
the right one. Black, who clearly must not forget the possibility of a sudden cxb5, generally reacts with ... bxc4 in situations of the type shown in diagram 225, and with ... b4 in those like 226. Although these different continuations respond to their own logic (the move ♕c2 is rather a tempo lost after ... bxc4, while the retreat ♘fd2 snarls up the development of the queenside after ... b4), it should not be thought that other continuations cannot be played, as will be clear later.

The interchanging of knights

If, in diagram 226, Black were to continue with ... bxc4, then after ♘c3 the white knights would be effectively and harmoniously placed: the QN (♘c3) protects the d5 pawn and prepares the advance e4, while the KN (♘d2) prepares to retake the c4 pawn and so assume a blockading position typical of the Modern Benoni. Since, however, as we have said, Black generally continues with ... b4, none of this appears to be a practical proposition.

To get round this, White has come up with an interesting interchange of knights: he can play ♘bd2 to begin with and, after the logical ... bxc4, carry on normally with e4. At this point, instead of retaking the c4 pawn with his KB he can change his knights round by means of the manoeuvre ♘g1–e2–c3 *(227)*.

227



Once he has completed this plan, he will find himself in the situation hypothesised above, namely the one we would see if in diagram 226 Black were to continue with ... bxc4.

It is very interesting to note that the same result could be achieved in diagram 215 if White were to continue more positionally with ♘f3–d2xc4 rather than the text. All this undoubtedly looks rather strange at first sight, but in fact it is very logical.

This possibility of interchanging knights means that even after first playing, for example, ♘bd2, White can manage to turn the tables and make it seem (at least to some extent) as though Black had voluntarily played ... bxc4.

2 Tactical ideas

The fluidity of the central situation in the Anti-Benko Centre, as in the Modern Centre, prevents us from identifying many recurring tactical points. This does not mean that on occasion play may not take a decidedly tactical bent. Individual variations, however, lead to conditions that are too different one from the other for it to be possible to isolate common tactical themes. We will confine ourselves here to mentioning those ideas that it is as well to know about, even though they are mainly specific.

The weakness of the a4–e8 diagonal

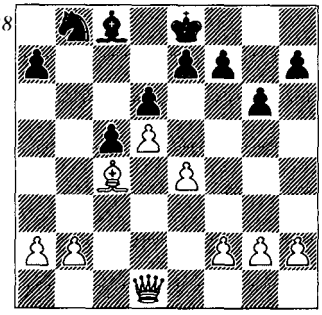
This is probably the most general tactical point of this type of centre because it is seen in lines in which Black plays ... b4 as well as in those in which he goes for ... bxc4. Any exploitation of the a4–e8 diagonal is usually elementary and based on a straightforward double attack *(228)*.

In the diagram, for instance, Black cannot play ... ♗a6? because after ♗xa6 ♘xa6, there follows ♕a4+ winning a piece.

Another version, just a little more sophisticated, is the following *(229)*.

After axb4, Black has to retake with his knight because on ...

228



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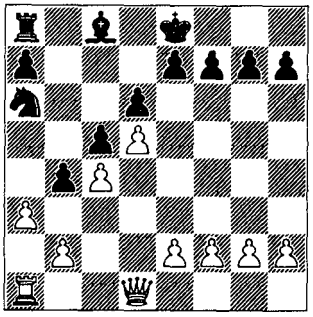


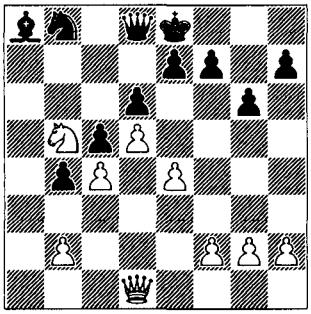
cxb4? there would follow ♖xa6, ♗xa6, ♕a4+ winning two pieces for the rook.

The danger of the ♘b5

One specific theme, which can sometimes also be linked to the previous one, occurs in variations in which White wins the b5 square for his QN *(230)*.

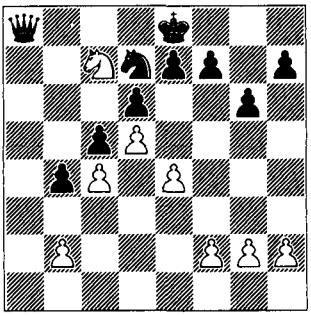
Here, after ♕a4, Black cannot wriggle out of the double threat of ♕xa8 and ♘xd6+ even by ... ♘d7, because in that case White

230



can answer with ♕xa8! ♕xa8, ♘c7+ *(231)* ...

231

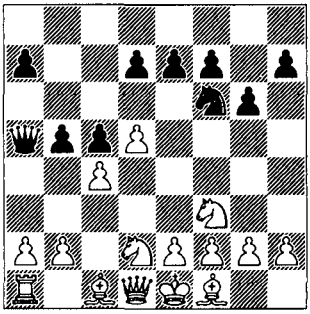


... recovering the queen and winning a piece. It should be pointed out that the white knight might be trapped after ... ♔d8, ♘xa8. However, even in such cases White usually manages to obtain maximum advantage from the tempi his opponent has to spend to recover the piece.

Trapping the black queen

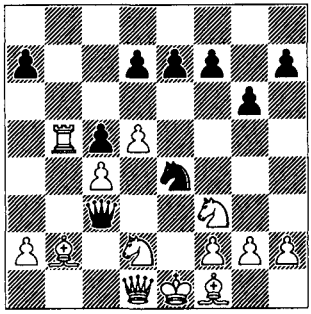
Sometimes, when White voluntarily develops his QN quickly to d2, Black may choose to prevent e4 by the pin ... ♕a5 *(232)*.

232



In such circumstances White can, in fact, still play e4 because ... ♘xe4? is refuted by b4! ♕xb4, ♖b1 ♕c3 (if ... ♘c3, ♖xb4 ♘xd1, ♖b3 and White wins the knight), ♖b3 ♕a5, ♖xb5 ♕c3, ♗b2 *(233)* ...

233



... and Black ends up losing his queen through trying not to lose his knight.

3 Illustrative games

Game 15
Browne–P. Wolff
USA 1985
Anti-Benko Variation

1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**b5**
4	**♘f3**	

This is much the most common and most flexible way to decline the Benko Gambit. Other individual paths are:

(1) 4 ♘d2 (taking an immediate decision on the development of the ♘b1; White retains the option of interchanging knights) 4... bxc4 (it is clear that the alternative 4 ... b4 is out of the question) 5 e4 d6 6 ♗xc4 (here 6 ♘e2 is possible, e.g.: 6 ... g6 7 ♘c3 ♗g7 8 ♘xc4 and, by switching the knights, White manages to clear the way for the development of his QB that had been shut in by his 4th move) 6 ... g6 7 b3 (White has time to fianchetto the bishop, but the position of his pieces is not ideal) 7 ... ♗g7 8 ♗b2 0-0 9 ♘gf3 ♘bd7 (9 ... e5!? has also been tried, but this seems to favour White after 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 0-0!, e.g.: 11 ... d5?! 12 ♗d3 with a clear advantage) 10 0-0 ♘b6 and Black is ready for action.

(2) 4 ♕c2 (another way for White to prepare e4) 4 ... bxc4 (an interesting possibility is 4 ... ♘a6!?, with the idea of meeting 5 e4? with 5 ... ♘b4 6 ♕e2 bxc4 with advantage; in the event of 5 cxb5 ♘b4 6 ♕xc5 ♘fxd5 7 ♗d2 ♗b7 8 ♕c1 ♖c8 9 ♘c3 Black's compensation for the pawn would seem adequate) 5 e4 e6 (for 5 ... d6 6 ♗xc4 g6 7 ♘f3 see the second line in the note to Black's 4th move of Game 16) 6 ♗xc4 exd5 7 exd5 d6 8 ♘c3 ♗e7 9 ♘ge2 0-0 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 a3 ♘b6 12 ♗a2 ♖e8 and the weakness of the d5 pawn is compensated for by White's greater attacking possibilities.

(3) 4 a4 (playing this before developing the KN has individual insignificance only if White aims to exploit the mobility of his f-pawn) 4 ... bxc4 (Black can also inaugurate a blockading strategy by means of 4 ... b4, e.g.: 5 g3 e5!? 6 dxe6 fxe6 7 ♗g2 d5 with equal chances) 5 ♘c3 d6 6 e4 g6 (6 ... ♗a6 does not create any particular problems for White, e.g.: 7 f4 ♘bd7 8 ♘f3 g6 9 a5! ♗g7 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 e6! ♘de5 13 ♕a4+ ♔f8 14 ♗e2 with the better prospects) 7 ♗xc4 ♗g7 8 f4 (for 8 ♘f3 see the third line in the note to Black's 4th move of Game 16) 8 ... 0-0 9 ♘f3 ♗a6 with balanced prospects.

(4) 4 ♗g5 (a continuation that has so far had few takers) 4 ...

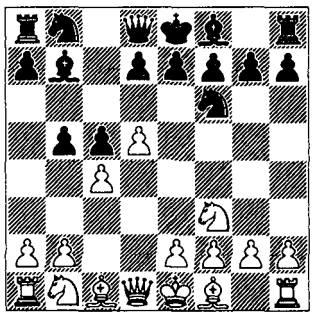
♘e4 (against 4 ... g6 White has succeeded in giving his QN some of the glory with 5 d6!?, e.g. 5 ... ♗b7 6 ♘c3 a6?! 7 ♗xf6 exf6 8 ♕d2 with the threat of ♕e3+ and better prospects, or 5 ... exd6 6 ♘c3 with the idea of either ♘xb5 or ♘e4, e.g. 6 ... a6?! 7 ♘e4 ♕a5+? 8 ♗d2 ♕d8 9 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 10 ♗c3 and wins) 5 ♗f4 ♕a5+ (5 ... e6 6 ♕c2 ♘xf2!? 7 ♔xf2 ♕f6 is a controversial variation) 6 ♘d2 bxc4 7 f3 ♘f6 8 e4 ♗a6 9 ♘e2! d6 10 ♘c3 and White has a harmonious position.

4 ... bxc4

With this capture, as with 4 ... b4 (for which see Game 16), Black voluntarily renounces the queenside tension. Naturally, there is a strong case for simply putting the ball back in White's court, for example by 4 ... ♗b7 (noted below, diagram 234) or 4 ... g6 (for which see the note to Black's fourth move in Game 16).

We note here an additional, tactical, method of dealing with this latter continuation (4 ... g6) following delayed capture of the gambit pawn: 5 cxb5 a6 6 ♘c3 axb5 7 d6!? ♗g7 (7 ... ♕a5 is an important alternative after which White may break the pin by 8 ♘d2, e.g. 8 ... ♗b7–8 ... b4 9 ♘c4–9 e4 ♘xe4 10 ♘dxe4 ♗xe4 11 ♗xb5 ♗g7 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 ♕e2! ♗f6 14 ♗d2 ♕b6 15 ♕xe4 and White emerges advantageously from the complications) 8 e4!? (the most ambitious move; 8 dxe7 ♕xe7 9 ♘xb5 0-0 10 e3 d5 11 ♗e2 ♘c6 12 0-0 ♗f5 gives Black easy development and good central control in return for the pawn) 8 ... b4 9 ♘b5 0-0 10 e5 ♘g4 with a very wild and unclear position.

234
W



It is not possible here to play either 5 ♘bd2 or 5 ♕c2, because of 5 ... bxc4 6 e4 e6 with a clear advantage for Black because White cannot satisfactorily meet the assault on his d5 pawn. There are, however, other methods for forcing the opponent to climb down off the fence. Let us have a look at all the possibilities:

(1) 5 ♘c3 (a rather overambitious try) 5 ... b4 6 ♘a4 e6 7 ♗g5 d6 8 e4 ♗e7 and Black has a more centralized position, e.g. 9 e5?! dxe5 10 dxe6 ♕c7! 11 exf7+ ♔xf7 12 ♗e3 ♖d8 with some advantage.

(2) 5 a4 bxc4 (after 5 ... a6 White can gain b5 for his QN, e.g. 6 axb5 axb5 7 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 8 ♘c3 ♕a5 9 ♗f4! d6 10 ♘d2 b4 11 ♘b5! g6 — if 11 ... ♘xd5?! 12 cxd5! ♕xb5 13 e4 with a strong initiative — 12 e4 ♘bd7 13 ♘b3 ♕b6 14 ♕a1 ♗b7 15 ♕a5 with better prospects) 6 ♘c3 g6 7 e4 d6 8. ♗xc4 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 e5 dxe5 11 ♘xe5 (it is useful to compare this position with the very similar one that occurs after the 11th move of the present game where the tempo White has expended on a2–a4 is deployed more actively to play ♖f1–e1; this is the price White has to pay for forcing his opponent to take a decision at the 5th move) 11 ... ♘fd7! (after 11 ... ♘bd7 12 ♘c6 ♗xc6 13 dxc6 ♘e5 14 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 15 ♗b5 White has the better chances) 12 ♘d3 ♘b6 13 ♗a2 (not 13 ♘xc5? ♘xc4 14 ♘xb7 ♕c7 and the White knight is trapped) 13 ... ♘a6 14 ♘f4 ♘b4 15 a5 with equal chances.

(3) 5 ♕b3 (it is obvious that this move only makes sense when Black has played ... ♗b7) 5 ... ♕b6 6 ♘c3 b4 (or 6 ... bxc4 7 ♕xb6 axb6 8 e4 e6 9 ♘e5! ♘xe4!? — White is better after 9 ... exd5 10 exd5 ♘xd5 11 ♗xc4 ♘xc3 12 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 13 bxc3 — 10 ♘xe4 exd5 with an unclear position that requires further practical tests) 7 ♘a4 ♕c7 (if 7 ... ♕a5 — with the idea of undermining the white centre with ... e6 — 8 ♘d2! e6 9 e4 and White keeps the centre blocked) 8 ♕c2 d6 9 a3 a5 and Black has no problems.

(4) 5 ♘fd2 b4 (Black can also opt to destroy the opposing centre with 5 ... bxc4 6 e4 e6!, e.g. 7 dxe6 dxe6 — not 7 ... fxe6!? 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♘xc4 ♘c6 10 ♘c3 ♘d4 11 ♘e4 with a clear advantage — 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 ♗xc4 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 and Black has better development although his pawn structure is a little weakened) 6 e4 d6 7 a3 ♘a6 (after 7 ... ♘bd7 8 axb4 cxb4 9 ♕a4! White is better; instead 7 ... a5! seems to be more suitable for keeping the ♘b1 bottled up) 8 axb4 ♘xb4 (not 8 ... cxb4 because of 9 ♖xa6) 9 ♗e2 g6 10 0-0 ♗g7 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♘b3 ♕b6 13 ♗e3 ♖ab8 14 ♖a3 and White's position is preferable because of the weakness of the a7 pawn and the passivity of the ♗b7.

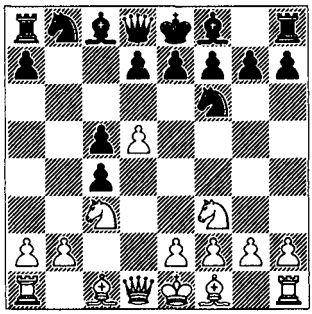
5 ♘c3 *(235)*

The immediate consequence of the exchange ... bxc4 is that White can develop his QN and prepare the advance e2–e4 in a perfectly natural way.

5 ... d6

It is evident that Black must curb the possibility of an immedi-

235
B



ate central expansion, e.g. 5 ... g6 6 e4 ♗g7?! 7 e5 ♘g4 8 ♗f4 with a decided advantage for White.

6 e4 g6

Supporters have also been found for 6 ... ♘bd7 to prevent White's next.

7 e5!

This seems to be the most direct line because it upsets the pawn chain e7–d6–c5 by considerably weakening the e7 and c5 points. With less forceful moves the game takes a more meandering turn and White can no longer hope for any substantial initiative in the opening, e.g.: 7 ♗xc4 ♗g7 (or 7 ... ♘bd7, along the lines of the idea mentioned in the previous note) 8 0-0 (8 e5! takes us back to the game) 8 ... ♗g4 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 0-0 11 ♕e2 ♘bd7 12 ♗d2 ♕c7 with more or less balanced prospects.

7 ... dxe5
8 ♘xe5 ♗g7
9 ♗xc4 0-0
10 0-0 ♗b7

Here Black can simplify play by 10 ... ♘fd7!?, although the position resulting from 11 ♘c6 (11 ♘xf7!? ♖xf7 12 d6 is a sacrifice that deserves attention) 11 ... ♘xc6 12 dxc6 ♘b6 13 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 14 ♗e2 (if 14 ♗b5 a6!) is by no means clear.

11 ♖e1

Another possibility is 11 ♕b3, e.g. 11 ... ♕b6 12 ♖e1 ♘a6 13 ♗g5 ♕xb3 14 ♗xb3 ♖ac8?! (14 ... ♘b4 is better, but 14 ... ♖fd8? loses because of 15 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 16 d6+ e6 17 ♖xe6 etc.) 15 ♘c4! ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xe7 ♖fe8 18 ♘d6 and White wins material with advantage.

11 ... ♘e8

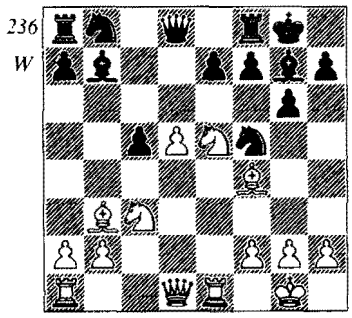
Now 11 ... ♘fd7? 12 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 13 d6 ♘e5 14 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗xf7+ leaves White clearly ahead because after 15 ... ♔xf7 there follows 16 ♕b3+ etc.

12 ♗f4 ♘d6
13 ♗b3

By blockading the d5 pawn Black has consolidated his position, but the weakness of the e7 and c5 pawns remains and White

may take advantage of it either strategically or tactically, e.g. 13 ... ♕c7 14 ♖c1 with the idea of applying pressure against c5, or 13 ... ♘d7? 14 ♘c6 ♗xc6 15 dxc6 ♘b6 16 ♖xe7! with a clear advantage.

13 ... ♘f5? *(236)*



Eager to reach d4, Black does not pay due attention to the thematic tactical possibilities that White can deploy in this variation and permits a brilliant dénouement.

14 ♘xf7! ♖xf7

Or if 14 ... ♔xf7 15 d6+ ♔e8 16 ♘b5 ♘a6 17 dxe7 with a decisive attack.

15 d6 e6

Black has no satisfactory defence, e.g. (1) 15 ... exd6 16 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 17 ♕b3+ and White recovers his sacrificed material with interest; (2) 15 ... ♘xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18 ♕b3+ is similar to the previous variation; (3) 15 ... ♗c6 16 dxe7! ♕e8 (if 16 ... ♕xd1 17 ♖axd1 ♗e8, then 18 ♖d8 wins) 17 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 (if 17 ... ♔xf7 18 ♕b3+ ♔f6 19 ♕e6 mate) 18 e8 (Q)+! ♗xe8 19 ♕d8 ♔f8 20 ♗xb8 and White is the exchange up with a decisive attack.

16 ♗xe6 ♗c6

Once again there is no way out, e.g. 16 ... ♕f8 17 ♘e4! ♗xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♘a6 (if 18 ... ♘c6 19 ♕d5 and wins) 19 ♕d5 ♖d8 20 d7 ♘e7 (if 20 ... ♘b4 21 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 22 ♖e8+ and wins) 21 ♕d6 ♘b4 22 ♗xf7+ and White wins (if 22 ... ♔xf7 23 ♕e6 mate).

17 ♘e4! ♘d4

After 17 ... ♗d4 White wins with 18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♘g5+ ♔g8 20 ♕b3+ etc.

18 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7
19 ♘xc5

Apart from the fact that by capturing a third pawn White has redressed the material balance, Black's exposed king and poor piece coordination leave him with no hope.

19 ... ♔g8
20 ♖c1 ♗d5

21	**♘b3**	**♗xb3**
22	**axb3**	**♘d7**

If 22 ... ♘bc6 23 ♖xc6 ♘xc6 24 ♕d5+ and wins.

23	**♖e7**	**♗f6**
24	**♗e3!**	**♘f5**
25	**♕d5+**	
	1–0	

After 25 ... ♔h8 there would follow 26 ♖xd7.

Game 16
Seirawan–Gurevich
USA 1986
Anti-Benko Variation

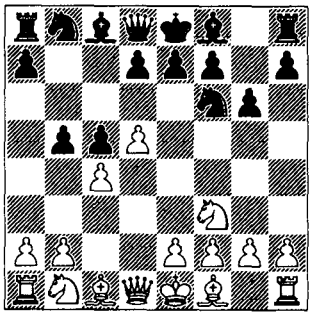
1	**d4**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**c5**
3	**d5**	**b5**
4	**♘f3**	

One of the advantages of this move compared to the other continuations is that in some variations White can return to the lines examined in the previous chapter. If, for example, he wanted to avoid the variation of Game 14, in the event of 4 ... g6 he could return to the line of Game 13 by playing 5 cxb5.

4	**...**	**b4**

In this continuation too — as in that of the previous game — Black voluntarily breaks the tension triggered by the gambit instead of prolonging it by 4 ... ♗b7 (for which see the note to Black's 4th in Game 15) or 4 ... g6 *(237)*.

237
W



In this position, in addition to the delayed capture of the gambit pawn (see note to Black's fourth move in game 15), White can either develop his QN forthwith or keep the tension going by the usual means. Let's have a look:

(1) 5 ♘bd2 (this idea looks even more passive here than on the previous move: see the first line in the note to White's 4th in Game 15) 5 ... ♗g7 (or 5 ... ♕a5 6 e4 ♗g7 — not 6 ... ♘xe4? 7 b4! ♕xb4 8 ♖b1 and White wins, as shown in the comment to diagram 232 — 7 e5 ♘g4 8 ♕e2 bxc4 9 h3 ♘h6 10 ♕e4 0-0 11 ♗xc4 d6 12 e6 ♘a6 13 0-0 fxe6 14 ♘b3 ♕a4 with superior prospects for Black) 6 e4 0-0 7 ♗d3 bxc4 8 ♘xc4 ♗a6 and Black has no problems.

(2) 5 ♕c2 bxc4 6 e4 d6 7 ♗xc4 (another possible plan is 7 ♘c3

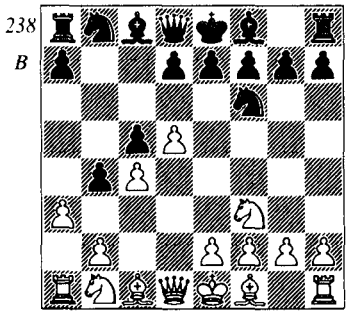
♗g7 8 ♘d2 with the idea of retaking on c4 with the knight) 7 ... ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 ♗a6 10 ♘a3 ♕c8 11 ♗f4 ♘bd7 12 ♖ab1 ♗xc4 13 ♘xc4 ♕a6 14 b3 ♘b6 15 ♘fd2 ♘fd7 with approximately equal chances.

(3) 5 a4 bxc4 6 ♘c3 d6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗xc4 0-0 9 0-0 (after 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♘xe5 ♗b7 11 0-0 we are back in the second line following from diagram 234) 9 ... ♗a6 10 ♗b5 ♗xb5 11 axb5 ♘bd7 12 ♕e2 ♘e8 13 ♖d1 ♘c7 14 ♗f4 ♕b8 15 e5 dxe5 (if 15 ... ♖e8 16 exd6 exd6 17 ♕d3 with a slight advantage for White) 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♕xe5 ♘xb5 with equality.

(4) 5 ♘fd2 ♕a5 (compared to the similar variation deriving from 4 ... ♗b7 5 ♘fd2, here Black is reluctant to play ... b4 because after a3 he would not be able to maintain the blockade with ... a5) 6 a3 ♗g7 7 ♘c3 b4 8 ♘b3 ♕d8 9 axb4 cxb4 10 ♘b5 a5 11 d6 0-0 12 ♘c7 ♖a7 13 ♗e3 ♖xc7 14 dxc7 ♕xc7 15 ♖xa5 ♘g4! 16 ♗c1 ♘xh2 with a position in which Black probably has adequate compensation for the sacrificed material.

5 a3! *(238)*

With this freeing move, White aims to increase the dynamism of his central pawns by taking on b4


238
B

before Black has time to defend his ♖a8 and support his b4 pawn by ... a5, so as to force Black to retake with his c5 pawn. Other continuations are, of course, possible against which, however, Black has better chances of setting up a blockading strategy than in diagram 218. Let's see:

(1) 5 ♗g5 d6 6 ♘bd2 g6 7 e4 (after 7 ♗xf6 exf6 8 e3 Black — by pursuing the plan ... ♗g7, ... f5, ... 0-0 — has at least equal prospects) 7 ... ♗g7 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 0-0?! (9 a3 is better, although here the freeing action is rather late and Black can retain his hold over c5 by 9 ... ♘bd7 as well as by 9 ... ♘a6) 9 ... a5! 10 ♕c2 e5! and Black has no problems.

(2) 5 ♘bd2 g6 (5 ... d6 is inaccurate because of 6 a3! bxa3 7 ♖xa3 and White's prospects are slightly better, e.g.: 7 ... e5?! 8 dxe6! fxe6 9 g3 ♘c6 10 ♗g2 ♕c7 11 ♘g5 ♗e7 12 ♕a4 d5 13 ♖e3! with advantage to White) 6 b3 (better is 6 e4 d6 7 a3! which falls back

into a pattern similar to the one we will encounter in the game) 6 ... ♗g7 7 ♗b2 0-0 8 e4 d6 9 ♕c2 e5 with a good game for Black.

(3) 5 b3 d6 6 ♘bd2 e5! (after 6 ... e6? 7 e4 exd5 8 cxd5 White is better) 7 e4 g6 8 a3 ♘bd7 9 ♗e2 ♗h6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♕c2 ♘h5! 12 g3 ♘g7 and Black has an advantage.

5 ... a5?

At this point some clarification is called for. As we have said, with his previous move White is trying to force his opponent, after axb4, to retake with ... cxb4. Now, we are certainly not saying that the resulting pawn configuration is strategically inferior for Black. Quite the contrary: if he is able to set up a blockade on c5 (for example by ... d6 and ... ♘bd7–c5) and advance his queenside pawns (with ... a5–a4) he will unquestionably obtain a preferable position. From this point of view, then, the text move cannot be considered wrong and to find the reason for the mistake we have to dig deeper.

Essentially, White wants to force ... cxb4 so as to free his c5 pawn and thus introduce two centre rams (the c- and e-pawns) into the equation ready to anticipate or unhinge all of his opponent's attempts to block the position. This gives the position, which is apparently blocked, an unexpected tactical-dynamic character that makes the time factor extremely important. So, from this point of view, the text move is a serious mistake because it does nothing to promote piece development nor does it do anything to safeguard the king.

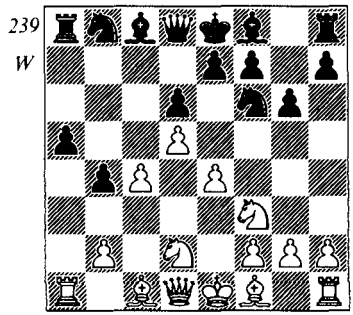
Black had to play 5 ... g6!, so readying himself to castle as quickly as possible or facilitate his development with a small material sacrifice, e.g.: 6 ♘bd2 ♗g7 7 e4 d6!? 8 g3 (after 8 axb4 cxb4 9 ♕a4+ ♘fd7 10 ♕xb4 ♘a6, Black has enough compensation for his pawn, e.g. 11 ♕a5 ♖b8 12 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 13 ♖b1 ♘dc5 14 ♗e2 f5! with the initiative) 8 ... 0-0 9 ♗g2 ♘bd7 10 0-0 (at this point it is against White's interest to play axb4 because his opponent has prepared the blockade of c5) 10 ... ♘g4 11 ♘e1 ♘b6 12 ♕c2 (not 12 axb4?! cxb4 13 ♘d3 a5 14 c5 dxc5 15 ♘xc5 ♕c7! 16 ♘a4 — after 16 ♘d3 ♗a6 Black's advantage is marked — 16 ... ♘e5! and Black is preferable) 12 ... a5 13 h3 ♘e5 14 f4 ♘ed7 15 ♘d3 ♕c7 16 ♔h2 bxa3 17 ♖xa3 a4 with equal chances.

6 ♘bd2 g6

It would be folly to concentrate solely on mobilizing his queenside, e.g. 6 ... ♗b7?! 7 e4 d6 8 axb4

axb4 9 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 10 e5 dxe5 11 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 12 ♘xe5 with a clear plus for White; or 6 ... ♘a6? 7 e4 d6 8 e5 ♘g4 9 axb4 axb4 10 e6! dxe6 11 ♘g5 with a decisive attack, e.g.: 11 ... exd5 12 cxd5 ♘c7 13 ♖xa8 ♘xa8 14 ♘e6 and wins.

	7	**e4**	**d6**
	8	**axb4**	**cxb4** *(239)*



The defects of Black's 5th are clearly in evidence: the delay in development, the imperfect blockade of c5 and e5 and the weakness of the diagonal a4–e8 are all elements that bode no good.

9	**c5!**	

A sacrifice that forms part of the logic of the position: White clears the f1–a6 diagonal to allow his KB a fast lane into the action and gains a further tempo by forcing his opponent to accept the offer.

9	**...**	**dxc5**

9 ... ♗g7 10 ♗b5+ ♔f8 (if 10 ... ♗d7 11 c6 wins) is unplayable for Black.

10	**♗b5+**	**♗d7**
11	**♗c4**	**e6**

Desperately trying to curb enemy aggression. On 11 ... ♗g7?! 12 e5 ♘g4 13 ♕e2 White would have had a crushing position.

12	**0-0**	**exd5**
13	**exd5**	**♗h6?!**

It would have been useless to try to castle after 13 ... ♗e7? because after 14 d6! ♗xd6 15 ♖e1+ ♗e7 16 ♘g5 0-0 17 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 18 ♘f3 White would have had a winning position.

Black might have provided stiffer opposition by blocking the d5 pawn with 13 ... ♗d6, although after 14 ♖e1+ ♔f8 15 ♘e4 ♘xe4 16 ♗h6+ ♔g8 17 ♖xe4 White's advantage would have been more than evident.

14	**♖e1+**	**♔f8**
15	**♘e5**	**♔g7**

Black tries to perform a makeshift castling operation, but the manoeuvre is cut short tactically. 15 ... ♗e8 would have prevented the sacrificial conclusion of the game, but White would have retained all his advantage by the straightforward 16 ♘b3.

16	**♘xf7!**	**♔xf7**
17	**d6+**	**♔f8**
18	**♖e7**	**♗e8**
19	**♘e4**	**♗xc1**
20	**♘xf6**	**♗xb2**
21	**♘xh7+**	**♖xh7**
22	**♕f3+**	**♗f7**
23	**♖xf7+**	
	1–0	

A memorable demolition job and paradigm of the dangers of delaying castling.

Table of Variations

This is a rather special table of variations, for which some explanation will be helpful.

On the left-hand side we have given the variations in their traditional divisions, sub-divided into minor variations. While these minor variations may be grouped here under one main variation, they will often be found in different chapters, according to their common type of centre.

The first percentage column gives victories for White, draws, and wins for Black, in that order. (As these statistics have in some cases been compiled from additional related variations to those alongside which the figures appear, they are meant as no more than a useful guide.) The next column gives the level of complexity of the variation from the point of view of strategy first, tactics second. The scale ranges from one to five. Finally there comes the percentage frequency with which the variations are played.

Modern Benoni

	% +	% =	% −	Strategy	Tactics	% frequency		Chapter
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6								
Fianchetto Variation	**34**	**39**	**27**	●●●	***	**17.6**		**2**
6 g3 g6	34	39	27	●●●	***		17.6	2
Knight Tour Variation	**45**	**37**	**18**	●●●	***	**2.9**		**3**
6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♘d2 ♗g7 8 ♘c4	45	37	18	●●●	***		2.9	3
Queen Check Variation	**58**	**23**	**19**	●●	****	**4.1**		**1-3**
(a) 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ (with e2–e4)	55	26	19	●●	****		3.6	1
(b) 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗f4 ♗g7 8 ♕a4+ (with e2–e3)	—	—	—	—	—		0.5	3
Uhlmann System	**39**	**39**	**22**	●●●	***	**7.4**		**1-3**
(a) 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗g5 (with e2–e4)	30	35	35	●●	****		2.6	1
(b) 6 ♘f3 g6 7 ♗g5 (with e2–e3)	44	42	14	●●●	**		4.8	3
Sämisch System	**33**	**44**	**23**	●●●	***	**12.7**		**1**
6 e4 g6 7 f3	33	44	23	●●●	***		12.7	1
Penrose Variation	**53**	**17**	**30**	●●	****	**4**		**1**
6 e4 g6 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 ♘ge2	53	17	30	●●	****		4	1
Bishop Check Variation	**56**	**20**	**24**	●●●	****	**5.5**		**1**
6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♗b5+	56	20	24	●●●	****		5.5	1
Standard Four Pawns Variation	**40**	**36**	**24**	●●	****	**6.2**		**1**
6 e4 g6 7 f4 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗e2	40	36	24	●●	****		6.2	1
Main Variation	**40**	**38**	**22**	●●●●	***	**30.6**		**1**
6 e4 g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0	40	38	22	●●●●	***		30.6	1
Unusual lines	**34**	**38**	**28**	—	—	**9.0**		**1-2-3**
(a) with e2–e4	32	44	24	—	—		6.6	1
(b) with e2–e3	—	—	—	—	—		0.5	3
(c) with g2–g3	—	—	—	—	—		1.9	2
TOTAL	**40**	**36**	**24**	●●●	****	**100**	100	**1-2-3**

Benko Gambit	%					%	
	+	=	−	Strategy	Tactics	frequency	Chapter
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5							
King's Walk Variation	**36**	**41**	**23**	●●●	****	**20.7**	**4**
(a) 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 ♗xa6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 e4 ♗xf1 8 ♔xf1	36	41	23	●●●	****	20,2	4
(b) Other lines	—	—	—	—	—	0,5	4
Fianchetto System	**43**	**32**	**25**	●●●●	***	**13.2**	**4**
4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 ♗xa6 6 g3	43	32	25	●●●●	***	13,2	4
Modern Variation	**38**	**41**	**21**	●●	****	**36.6**	**5**
(a) 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3	34	43	23	●●	****	26,3	5
(b) Other lines	50	36	14	●●●	***	10,3	5
Anti-Benko Variation	**35**	**36**	**29**	●●●	***	**29.5**	**6**
(a) 4 ♘f3	33	41	26	●●●	***	23,9	6
(b) Other lines	—	—	—	—	—	5,6	6
TOTAL	**38**	**38**	**24**	●●●	****	**100**	100 **4–5–6**